Donald F. Staub *Editor*

Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education

Global Issues, Models, and Best Practices from the Middle East and Turkey

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ISBN 978-3-030-21420-3 ISBN 978-3-030-21421-0 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my appreciation to the United States Embassy—Ankara, Turkey, for its initial support of this project and its ongoing support for quality English language education in Turkey and this region.

I am also extremely grateful to Rosemary Papa for her guidance and support of this project.

Finally, this book is for Bora, who is the language of love, music, and happiness.

Contents

Chapter 1
The Increasing Need for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education

Donald F. Staub

Abstract The rapid growth of higher educational institutions globally has been well documented. This has been followed by an equally substantial increase in the number of institutions that are offering English as the medium of instruction (EMI). While this may be seen as a welcome development as it suggests increased access to higher education and employment opportunities, it also elevates concerns regarding quality of education. Many argue that the concern is justified given the number of "diploma mills" offering degrees for sale. Indeed, the need to verify institutional and programmatic legitimacy has led to the expansion of the institutional and specialized accreditation industries. This is particularly the case for the EMI segment of the higher education sector. To illustrate, in Turkey, a two-decade expansion of the higher education sector has been accompanied by an increase in the number of schools offering EMI. This trend has generated questions regarding governance, quality assurance, and accreditation of those programs that are preparing students for English language academic programs. In turn, the Turkish Council on Higher Education has supported both external review and accreditation schemes that specifically address these issues. This, however, is not exclusive to Turkey. Throughout the region, and primarily the Middle East, we see emerging and continuing efforts to raise quality in English and foreign language education, which is why this volume is timely. It is during this critical period that the chapters that follow examine global and regional challenges and solutions regarding quality and accreditation in language education.

Higher education, globally, once again finds itself in a unique transitional period. Multinational campuses, MOOCs, microcredentials, and massification (Tight, 2017) characterize many of the conversations around where higher education is, and where it may be going. Despite conversations around the end of higher education as it is currently conceived, the overwhelming impression is one of expansion, whether domestically or internationally (Altbach, 2015). Across developing economies,

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_1

access to higher education has experienced a sharp upward trajectory, as policy changes in many countries have created a more welcoming climate for private higher education. Poland is an oft-cited model (Kwiek, 2009), as is Turkey, where nearly half of 200 higher education institutions are private, and have been established in only the last 20 years.

Prior to this growth period, higher education, primarily public higher education, was accessible only to the relatively few that managed to successfully navigate rigorous admittance systems. As higher education opportunities have opened up to greater percentages of populations, we are seeing a transition to a more consumer-driven market. In other words, while there still remains high demand for low-cost public higher education, for a substantial proportion of consumers, "choice" and "quality" are driving higher education decisions. Furthermore, other major stakeholders, be it the government or investors, are also inquiring about quality (Blanco-Ramírez & Berger, 2014; Burke, 2005; Shah, Nair, & Wilson, 2011).

Indeed, while in this period of substantial growth in higher education, we are also experiencing greater emphasis on the activity of quality assurance (Cao & Li, 2014). Whether quality assurance efforts are driven internally by a university administration or externally by a governmental or certifying body, institutions are increasingly turning to accreditation to verify quality; this may take place at the institutional level or the unit (i.e., program) level. This movement is considered to be well-justified, given the emergence of "dubious" and "bogus" institutions (e.g., Levy, 2008; Ozturgut, 2011; UNESCO, 2005) around the globe that are purportedly taking advantage of the widespread desire for a higher education diploma.

This has resulted in rising demand for accrediting bodies, particularly specialized accreditors, that were originally established in the West for the purpose of accrediting schools in that region (Eaton, 2015; Knight, 2015; Morse, 2015; Salmi, 2015). This has been perhaps most visible for the fields of Engineering and Business, with ABET and AACSB standing as the most prevalent schemes. However, the global expansion in higher education institutions is also characterized by the significant percentage of universities that offer instruction through the medium of English (EMI) (Dearden, 2014; Earls, 2016; Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013; Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2018). This has resulted in considerable interest in the quality assurance, and subsequently, the specialized accreditation of English language programs.

To some degree, the evidence clearly justifies the need for, even the demand for, a greater focus on quality in English language education. Taking Turkey as an illustration, the collective research picture is one of deep concern in terms of level of English among university students (Başıbek et al., 2014; Dearden, Macaro, & Akincioglu, 2016; Kirkgoz, 2008). A recent analysis of the state of English language education in Turkish higher education noted that a number of deficiencies exist within the current system (British Council, 2015). Namely due to a lack of English language teachers at the tertiary level who are skilled at developing and delivering courses in English for Academic Purposes, and also in part because faculty members in academic programs are not skilled at, or interested in, assisting their students with language needs while delivering content.

The report precipitated a collaborative effort between the British Council and the Turkish Council on Higher Education (CoHec) to address such issues. This partnership has resulted in an external review program to improve the quality of education provided in university-level intensive English language programs. In 2018, the British Council-CoHec collaborative began a process to establish and implement a developmental (i.e., nonpunitive) external review process of English language programs.

Meanwhile, a concurrent effort has been underway to establish an English language program accreditation body within Turkey. This would be the country's first such national language-related accrediting scheme, and the fourth such scheme operating in the country. To date, there have been three external/international schemes associated with quality assurance and accreditation in Turkey: The US-based Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), the UK/Europe-based Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality Language Services (EAQUALS), and Pearson-Edexcel. As CoHec has stepped up efforts to increase overall quality in higher education, it has done so by encouraging the pursuit of accreditations, as well as the establishment of national, specialized accrediting bodies. It is within this environment that a group of professionals and peers began the establishment of the Association for Language Education Evaluation and Accreditation (DEDAK). Once DEDAK receives formal confirmation from CoHec, its accreditation work will complement that of the British Council-CoHec quality review scheme.

Although this illustration highlights an approach that is underway in Turkey, it is clear that it mirrors the context found in many other developing countries in the region and around the world. As this book aims to show, local issues quite often are a reflection of, or the outcome of, the global context. And while the titles of the chapters or the locales of the case studies presented in this volume may suggest context-relevant anecdotes, they indeed offer messages to a much broader audience.

This book has been divided into three separate sections, with the intent to start broad and eventually drill into the local level with best practices. Section 1 explores the broader, global context around quality and accreditation in language education in higher education. **Yasemin Kırkgöz** begins with an overview of the rapidly expanding field of English Medium Instruction (EMI) with its idealistic vision and realistic outcomes. She takes a look at EMI regionally by highlighting the issues around delivery in Israel, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Next, **Bassam Alhamad** weighs the challenges and complements of international and national quality assurance and accreditation schemes. Through a specific case study analysis carried out at the University of Bahrain, Bassam asks the question of the benefits and demands of implementing multiple quality assurance systems simultaneously. **Mary Reeves**, executive director of the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), offers her perspective on the decision-making process of a national, specialized accreditation scheme that has gone international; the questions asked and the responses formulated to increase relevance in other countries. **Ludka Kotarska**, director of accreditation at Eaquals, raises the question of whether accreditation

actually offers value addition to language programs, or is it simply a commodity that language teaching institutions are seeking to acquire for marketing purposes. She does this by conducting a global examination of language program accreditation schemes, building a case that quality can indeed by an outcome of such processes.

Section 2 takes the discussion of quality assurance in language education from the global to the national. In this section, a selection of authors explore pressing issues around quality language education in Turkey, the UAE, Qatar, and Oman. **Hacer Şivil** begins with an overview of Turkey's centralized higher education system, and the impact that it has had on quality assurance, particularly in language education programs. Next, **Burcu Tezcan Unal** examines language education in the United Arab Emirates, with a particular emphasis on the social context that has been created with the substantial number of expatriate workers in the country. **Khalid Elhassan** and **Ahmad Fawzi Kabaha** conduct an analysis of bridging programs in Qatar that are designed to close the gap between secondary and postsecondary education in their country. In particular, they highlight programs that are designed to raise the level of English in students who are transitioning to universities in Qatar. **Khalaf Marhoun Al'Abri**, **Fawzia Al-Seyabi**, and **Mahmoud Imam Amer** of Sultan Qaboos University in Oman describe the process of undergoing ACTFL accreditation through a case study of their program that prepares English language instructors for Oman and the region. In the final chapter of this section, **Engin Ayvaz** and **Didem Mutçalıoğlu** comprehensively analyze the development of a national, specialized accreditation scheme for English language education. Their chapter explores the political, personal, and organizational factors that help or hinder the achievement of a scheme that impacts a country's entire higher education sector.

Section 3 is dedicated to best practices in improving the quality of foreign language education. **Ian Collins** and **Bahar Gün** present the case that professional development of language instructors is an essential piece of the quality assurance puzzle; that an institution cannot consider quality assurance or accreditation without including a plan, and action, around professional development. **Heinz Ulrich Schmidt** takes readers on a tutorial of learning outcomes, providing clear definitions and illustrations of implementation from accreditation case studies. In the volume's final chapter, **Abdullah Al-Bargi** takes readers through the process of applying for and successfully achieving accreditation for the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia; specific illustrations are provided on the relationships between standards of the accreditation scheme and actual outcomes realized within the ELI.

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Part I
Global Perspectives on Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Chapter 2
Investigating the Growth of English-Medium Higher Education in Turkey and the Middle East Region

Yasemin Kırkgöz

Abstract This study aims to provide the current landscape in relation to English-medium instruction (EMI) in Turkey and some selected countries in the Middle East region. The study investigates the growth of EMI in higher education, and the internationalization of education policies by Turkey and the Middle East governments. In this context, the very meaning of EMI is presented, and its benefits for the local contexts are given. The chapter also outlines some of the current issues and key challenges relating to EMI encountered at the practical, microlevel, based on research evidence.

2.1 Introduction

The global demand for competent language users has resulted in a growing need for high-quality education for English language learners across the World (Barnawi & Phan, 2014). This continuing demand for English education has led policy makers in Turkey and several countries in the Middle East region to appropriate English as the medium of instruction (EMI) in higher education in the interest of the country. One impetus for this is the fact that English as a global language represents a social, cultural, linguistic, political, educational, and economic capital. As noted by Phan (2013), English as a global language and the language of international communication "is an accepted understanding that internationalization of higher education is based upon and from which localization of knowledge is generated (and disseminated)" (p. 162). Internationalization for higher education institutions in Turkey and in many non-English speaking countries in the Middle East region means adopting English as the medium of instruction (MOI) and constructing knowledge through English language (Phan & Barnawi, 2015). The overarching aim of EMI is given by Macaro (2013–2014) as:

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_2

> To promote knowledge and understanding of an academic subject such as physics or economics, and that historical and geopolitical factors have determined that such a subject (in non-Anglophone countries should be taught through the medium of English rather than in the majority language of the country in which the programme is taking place. (p. 28)

Macaro (2013–2014) claims that adopting the EMI program yields two main benefits to the institution: the first is to internationalize universities. By offering courses through EMI, it is believed that the institution will attract students from all over the world thereby bringing both revenue and prestige to it. Another benefit is considered to be a way of forcing a change in higher education pedagogy. He also describes a number of aims as having potential benefits to the students of the country adopting the EMI program: First, EMI facilitates learning of academic subjects by home students. It is argued that since much academic content is written in English, students will find it easier if the teaching is done through English. It could also improve the English language capacity of the home country in general. In addition, home students can compete in a world market by enhancing their global employability in specific areas. Macaro claims that EMI could do this in a more cost-effective way than ELT/EFL, and it could also do this in a more authentic way (Macaro, 2013–2014).

This chapter first describes in some detail recent developments in the use of EMI in higher education in Turkey and some select Middle East countries: Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. It provides a general description of English education policies in the respective countries, and then it expands on how local EMI education policies play out at the micro level. It, then, critically examines current issues and challenges in policy and practices of EMI in higher education in Turkey and the region.

2.2 Turkey

Turkey is uniquely positioned geographically in both the West and the East, with neighbors in the Middle East. The country occupies a unique position. Nearly 97% of its total land area of 814.578 km^2 is located in Asia, comprising the peninsula of Asia Minor, also known as Anatolia and, the remaining 3% lies in Turkish Thrace (Trakya). As such, Turkey is situated at the crossroads of the Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East, and Eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey has a long-established EMI program. Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkey has responded to the global influences of English in its education system through planned education policies. With the implementation of the policy to open to the Western world, along with the drive for internationalization, several official measures have been taken to promote English, allowing English as a foreign language (EFL), to spread across the country (Kırkgöz, 2017).

In Turkey, the underlying motivation to prioritize English in higher education could be attributed to the perceived language needs for national development and economic competitiveness in an increasingly globalized world, as in many Middle Eastern countries. At the national level, English serves an instrumental value, a

means of gaining access to better education and a more prestigious job with good benefits and prospects for promotion (Kırkgöz, 2005). The country also has political and economic ambitions to participate in a globalized economy and to internationalize its education.

At the level of higher education, as internationalization and globalization pushed the EMI agenda forward in Turkey; in 1996, the first official attempt to establish a list of criteria that a university or a department desiring English as its MOI had to meet was issued by the Turkish Higher Education Council [Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu (YÖK)] (1996, cited in Kırkgöz, 2009). This encouraged many universities in Turkey to offer EMI programs with the aim of developing national human capital with proficiency in English. The number has significantly increased since the Turkish government allowed officially for private universities along with state universities to offer EMI.

In addition to Turkey's efforts to respond to globalization through EMI in higher education, globalization is also manifested by the internationalization of education, covering a wide range of services, from recruitment of international students, to internationalized curricula, to research and partnerships with foreign universities. An investigation into the web pages of the majority of Turkish universities clearly indicates that universities in Turkey mention internalization in their current mission statements and include it in their strategic plans (Kırkgöz, 2017).

The Turkish government's globalization and internationalization orientations have directly affected universities. The response by most universities to globalization has manifested through the establishment of EMI programs. The trend to use English as a medium of instruction, while offering several instrumental benefits such as higher-paid jobs (Kırkgöz, 2005), has often been criticized for undermining the quality and effectiveness of university teaching and learning, as revealed by a growing body of evidence, which suggests that EFL students experience considerable difficulties in coping with the demands of EMI university studies.

Sert (2008) investigated student and subject lecturers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the use of English/Turkish in the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge in three Turkish universities. Although EMI is found to be effective in developing language skill, the research suggests that EMI fails to convey the academic content effectively. In another study, Karakaş (2014) surveyed 33 lecturers' self-evaluation of their English skills and practices in three long-established prominent EMI universities in Turkey through an online questionnaire. The participants were from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering, delivering EMI courses in the disciplines of international relations, economics, electrical and electronics engineering, computer engineering, and mechanical engineering. Karakaş (2014) reports that "it can be safely put that the lecturers in this study generally assessed their English skills to be of a high level; more than 90% of them identified their overall academic English as either 'good' or 'excellent'. Regarding the micro-skills (e.g. pronunciation, accent, grammar, fluency), lecturers' ratings and markings on attitude scales indicate that they feel or experience no problems in using these skills efficiently while teaching in English"

(p. 122). As concluded by Karakaş, when the findings are considered holistically, Turkish lectures in this particular study felt capable of lecturing through EMI, without any obvious language-related obstruction.

In a related study, Kırkgöz (2014) investigated the perceptions of two comparable groups of final-year engineering students in Turkish higher education where disciplinary knowledge is delivered both through Turkish as the medium of instruction (TMI) and English as the medium of instruction (EMI). The study aimed to compare students' acquisition of disciplinary knowledge in EMI versus TMI. Participants in the study were 130 final-year engineering students (66 TMI and 64 EMI). Through a questionnaire, a picture was drawn of the undergraduate engineering students' perceptions of the benefits, and any perceived challenges to the acquisition, of their disciplinary knowledge in EMI or TMI, and what impact the medium of instruction (English or Turkish) had on their learning. The study revealed positive-oriented perceptions of EMI students in terms of enhancing English language skills, gaining access to primary sources in English and keeping up with global developments in their disciplines. Furthermore, students anticipated instrumental benefits EMI would offer upon graduation, i.e., getting higher-paid jobs. Unlike EMI students, TMI students were found to comprehend disciplinary knowledge more easily, learning in detail, and achieving long-lasting retention.

The findings present a cause for concern in programs where the medium of instruction is in English. EMI students reported experiencing difficulties in understanding, particularly the details of their disciplinary knowledge. As a consequence, they tended to memorize disciplinary knowledge to achieve short-term objectives, e.g., passing examinations, admitting that they adopted superficial rather than effective learning. Also, EMI students explained that what they memorized was likely to be quickly forgotten. In contrast, a majority of the TMI students (86%) agreed that they had a better understanding of disciplinary knowledge, understood it in greater detail, retained it longer, and achieved a higher level of learning. The study confirms earlier research (Sert, 2008) suggesting that EMI is effective in terms of language skills development but is rather ineffective in the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge.

Recently, Turhan and Kırkgöz (2018) investigated motivational variations of mechanical engineering students and lecturers in an EMI university in Turkey, given the idea that motivation may be an influential factor determining the success of EMI implementations. To get an in-depth perspective of the topic, a questionnaire along with focus group interviews were used with both cohorts of participants. The questionnaire results indicated no significant differences among the first, second, third, and fourth year undergraduate engineering students' motivation toward EMI; yet, it was found that the first-year students were slightly more motivated toward EMI. Furthermore, students across the grades seemed to be mostly motivated by both integrative and instrumental reasons toward EMI, confirming the findings of an earlier study (Kırkgöz, 2005). Interview findings showed that both students and lecturers referred greatly to instrumental reasons that EMI offers.

2.3 Israel

Israel, a Middle Eastern country, is located on the south eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and the northern shore of the Red Sea. To the north, it has land borders with Lebanon, to the northeast with Syria, to the east Jordan, to the East and West to the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Egypt to the southwest.

In Israel, official languages are Hebrew (80%) and Arabic (20%). The language policy in Israeli higher education favors Hebrew; in universities and colleges, the MOI is mostly Hebrew. English, as a nonofficial language in the country, is valued as an important asset for personal development, social mobility, and success. It is the only foreign language that is used mainly for academic purposes (EAP) in almost all of the disciplines. The academic body includes eight universities, 21 public and 15 academic colleges, and two teacher education institutions, all government-sponsored via the Israeli Council of Higher Education (Or & Shohamy, 2017). Hebrew is used as the MOI in all universities, except for a few teacher education colleges using Arabic. The current MOI in academic institutions in Israel remains largely Hebrew. Proficiency in academic English is also required, since many academic sources are available in English, very similar to the situation in Turkey and other Middle East countries.

It is reported by Or and Shohamy (2017) that in the last two decades there has been an increase in EMI programs mostly at universities and in some teacher education colleges, for local students both at undergraduate and graduate levels. Rothberg International school (RHI) of Hebrew university, Tel-Aviv university, School of overseas students (OSP) and MA programs; International school of Haifa university, and Ginsburg-Ingerman overseas Student program (OSP) of Ben-Gurion University are some examples offering EMI programs. As noted by Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra (2013), during the last decade an overwhelmingly growing number of academic courses are taught in English rather than in the local language.

While English has been used for many years as the MOI for overseas students at Israeli universities, it is recently that EMI has become much more common at universities and academic colleges, offered for local and overseas students (Gonen, 2008). This recent turn towards English is linked, as it is in many other contexts, to continuing globalization, in which knowledge of English, the world's lingua franca, is believed to offer cultural and social capital and economic benefits (Or & Shohamy, 2017). Following this trend, teacher education colleges in the country have begun to attract international students with a view to facilitating social and cultural exchange. Another reason is to encourage prospective teachers to improve their proficiency by studying content courses in English, on the assumption that exposure to such courses will promote local student teachers' level of English; consequently, it will improve their ability to access international resources and participate in international professional communities.

Research related to EMI in the Israeli context remains limited. The first initiative to investigate an EMI context was by Inbar-Lourie and Donitsa-Schmidt (2014),

who conducted two studies to examine from different perspectives the effects of applying the model of EMI to content courses in one of the largest academic teachers' colleges of education in Israel. The college prepares prospective teachers in various disciplines for schools. While the MOI in all courses on the campus is said to be Hebrew, courses offered in the EAP department and those geared for prospective teachers for EFL was in EMI.

Through an online self-report questionnaire, the first study looked at a wide sample of prospective teachers' (n = 200) attitudes and motivations towards studying courses in EMI. The study revealed that the strongest motivations to register for an EMI course were to "improve one's English and become more proficient in the language." The second highest motivational factor was gaining "extra credit," followed by "the ability to resort to Hebrew whenever needed," "the desire to communicate with English speakers," and "the desire to experience such a venture" (Inbar-Lourie & Donitsa-Schmidt, 2014, p. 162). Participant students' attitudes towards the importance of English converged into two factors: English as an asset versus English as a threat. The participants did not consider English as a threat to Hebrew or Arabic language and culture, viewing English as a mediocre asset.

The second study focused on a group of students who had participated in a scheduled summer course in English regarding their attitudes towards the course. In an open question, students stated their main motive for joining the course as to relieve the pressure during the school year, followed by curiosity about such a course, the experience of studying a course in English, and finally because of the opportunity to interact with English speakers. It is reported that students did not find the English course difficult. The participants expressed their experience as "mostly challenging, interesting and valuable because of the use of English." It is concluded that students are interested in taking EMI courses, but prefer summer courses rather than courses delivered during the year. Owing to the scarcity of the EMI-related research in the Israeli context, the authors call for further studies involving a greater number of participants.

2.4 Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, one of the oil-rich Gulf States, is also the largest sovereign state of the Middle East. Saudi Arabia has been highly ambitious in its mission to internationalize the higher education system to promote national, institutional, and individual competitiveness. As confirmed by Barnawi and Al-Hawsawi (2017), policy makers strongly believe that EMI is the primary tool for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the country. In this context, the Saudi government, adopting top-down internationalization policies, has allocated billions of dollars and is offering generous incentives to internationalize its higher education system through various means. The Saudi government has nearly tripled its budget since 2004 and more new universities have been opened with international standards.

Supported by the government, Saudi higher education institutions are establishing international collaboration and partnerships with overseas universities, namely, American, Australian, and British universities in their endeavors of globalization in higher education and benchmarking academic programs. One of the largest organizations, Technical and Vocational Training Cooperation (TVTC), which runs all the Technical Colleges with 35 branches, Girls' Higher Training Institutes with 17 branches, and Vocational Institutes with 70 branches across the country, is now adopting international curricula, syllabi, and assessment practices, and English is considered as MOI in most of the programs. Moreover, the TVTC contracted the interlink Language Centers in 2012–2013, the leading association of intensive English programs in the USA to provide intensive English programs for all TVTC alumni across the KSA. It is also reported that over 4000 Saudi alumni are taking this program every year to help them enhance their overall literacy in English communication and function well in the job markets (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017).

Recently, the Saudi Government launched the "Colleges of Excellence" Project, involving its technical and vocational education and training. For this Project, international training providers opened branch campuses across the country. It is reported that currently there are 37 international institutes operating in the country. "Of these, 24 colleges are UK-affiliated and the rest are affiliated with colleges and training companies in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Germany, and Netherlands" (Barnawi & Phan, 2014, p. 6).

EMI is gaining popularity in Saudi higher education. It is anticipated that Saudi universities and colleges will continue to spend more resources on getting the assistance of British/American experts for retraining their cadre. KAUST is a science-and-technology university that has engaged with collaborative ventures with 27 universities worldwide and created five international alliances of academic excellence. These international universities offer advice related to staff selection and curricula in science and engineering and have participated in several collaborative research studies (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017).

Rapid internationalization of higher education has given rise to several questions related to the national cultural identity of Saudi Arabia. Barnawi and Al-Hawsawi (2017) draw attention to the two critical issues. The government's recent educational initiatives concerning English education policy and practices have generated a number of major issues and challenges. Despite all efforts, studies on EFL education in Saudi schools report the outcomes of English education as below expectations. It is maintained that English education lacks a comprehensive framework that defines the target English proficiency levels of Saudi learners at each stage of their learning. Adopting Western language learning framework at local universities and inviting external agencies to design and assess EFL programs among others was criticized as *Blind Adoption of the International Framework.* They regrettably state that "because of the absence of a clearly defined language framework in the country, local universities and colleges are uncritically using 'the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment' (CEFR) to operate their intensive English language programs as well as the textbooks and other teaching materials by foreign providers" (p. 214).

Barnawi (2012 cited in Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017) investigated pedagogical effectiveness of the CEFR in a Saudi university. He found that the CEFR produced reactions in the prep-year intensive English program in terms of curriculum, syllabus, assessment, and materials at that university. He further reports that "students have become primary victims which transplant inappropriate Western pedagogies into the Saudi context" (p. 215). According to Barnawi and Al-Hawsawi (2017), the current EFL teaching in higher education contexts reflects "disconnected" and "fragmented implementation" endeavors at various stages of education. It is maintained that these practices have also created contradictions in the English education policies and practices, as well as self-doubt among policy makers who often believe that top-down policy changes coupled with internationalization practices would be the most effective approach for promoting mass literacy in English in the country.

Another critical issue is related to the practices of internationalization of the higher education system. The internationalization aspect of higher education is very much influenced by Western ideology, which is very much embedded in educational policies, pedagogy, and practices. It is maintained that "EMI universities are competing against each other to import Western educational knowledge such as the CEFR, franchised programs without taking the role of critical consumers and responsible producers into account" (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017, p. 216). It is feared that this tendency will inevitably shape policies and practices of internationalizing Saudi higher education system in such a way as to reinforce an English-only mentality, the use of Western pedagogies, and a type of intellectual dependency, and in turn will create a widespread perception of "Western better." This would further adversely affect the values, tradition, and national identity of the country (Phan, 2013).

2.5 Kuwait

Similar to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait is another oil-rich Gulf state country of the Middle East. Arabic is the official language of the State of the Kuwait. Tryzna and Al Sharoufi (2017) report that the discovery of oil in the country and the rapid developing oil-producing industry necessitated the training of the local work force in the 1930s, leading to the development of English for specific purposes (ESP). The economic development of the country linked with the oil production and technology import further strengthened the status of English used as a vehicle for international communication. The current status of English as a second language (ESL) is also reinforced by the labor market model, which heavily relies on the expatriate workforce in the private industries and technological advancements, global trade, and Kuwaiti citizens' international trade for various purposes (Al-Yaseen, 2000).

Higher education institutions comprise public and private colleges and universities. Established in 1966, Kuwait University is a government-sponsored higher education institution comprising 16 colleges; art, science, engineering and petroleum, and social sciences, among others. English is used as the language of instruction in such colleges as medicine, dentistry, engineering, and petroleum (Tryzna & Al Sharoufi, 2017).

Kuwait also offers several private universities modeled on the American style, the most prominent is the American University of Kuwait (AUK) and Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), both affiliated with American and British universities, respectively. The Australian College of Kuwait, Box Hill College, and the American University of the Middle East are among other English language colleges and universities. Undergraduate programs are offered on a range of subjects including business administration, computer science, engineering, humanities, education, and mass communication. A high level of English language proficiency is required to be admitted to universities from one of the standardized tests such as TOEFL IBT and IELTS.

Tryzna and Al Sharoufi (2017) point out that Kuwaiti foreign language education faces a number of critical issues. The number of non-Kuwaiti teachers at all stages constitutes a higher percent of the cadre compared to Kuwaiti teachers. Given that Kuwaiti teachers are trained under the supervision of the Ministry of Education while expatriate teachers receive their degrees and training from their home countries leads to an imbalance with a higher number of expatriates in need of better training in teaching ESL. Tryzna and Al Sharoufi (2017) argue that developing a regional curriculum would be one of the solutions for ELT problems. Kuwait is part of the Gulf-Co-operation Council (GCC), which includes also Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and UAE, to enable these countries to be part of a collaborative language teaching program in initial language teacher education program. At higher education, the program necessitates specific requirements for qualified language teachers in schools similar to the European Union.

Tryzna and Al Sharoufi (2017) suggest that (GCC) countries set a common effective language policy so that foreign language teachers take specific courses to gain a pedagogically acceptable qualification in ELT. Also, a standardized language program could be established in initial language teacher education colleges and universities combining modern language methodology and the use of technology, "customizing what is culturally appropriate for Kuwaiti and GCC countries" (p. 88).

2.6 Discussion

Countries including Turkey and those in the Middle East have mainly focused on quantity by instituting a massive expansion of university student numbers into EMI programs. On the other hand, the effect of EMI on the quality of students' learning experiences and their academic performances has largely been overlooked, indicating that quantity does not equal quality. While countries are growing EMI institutions, they should have a plan in place for assessing the quality of those institutions, and the system overall. Enhancing the quality of EMI should therefore be given high priority by the governments of those countries. Initiatives can be launched to enhance the quality of university education for the subject lecturers as well as for the EMI students. As the implementation of EMI poses many challenges particularly for students with low English language proficiency, adjunct courses could be offered in EMI departments to support students with

their English language proficiency and their learning subject matter knowledge through deeper comprehension. Another crucial issue is the linguistic and pedagogic competence of EMI lecturers. They should also be given the opportunity to develop their linguistic and pedagogic competence that would allow them to accommodate students' learning needs and difficulties to enable the lecturers to effectively deliver academic content through EMI. These having been achieved, it is likely to see the emergence of a picture of a much healthier English medium university education that will keep abreast with the country needs, contributing to economic and social development.

On the basis of an investigation on Turkey and the three Middle Eastern countries, this chapter has studies the policy and practice of EMI in the context of higher education in these countries. As such, the chapter has provided insights into the motivations and outcomes of EMI to capture the complexity of this issue in the region. It is possible to draw some overarching conclusions based on this investigation. The current practices involved in the EMI in higher education in Turkey and the Middle East context demonstrate evident similarities and variations between the countries. It is clear that in this era of the globalization and internationalization of higher education, English is considered to be a primary tool for human resources. As a consequence of the pressures to conform to a global international agenda, countries have made adjustments in the MOI policies to respond systemically to the challenges brought about by globalization and internationalization through the kind of EMI initiatives implemented at macro and micro policy levels. While countries investigated have been making considerable investments into EMI, the implementation of successful policies for promoting effective content learning continues to remain a major concern not only for Turkey but also for the remaining countries investigated.

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Chapter 3
Balancing National and International Accreditation Requirements to Achieve National Strategic Trends: A Case Study: University of Bahrain

Bassam Alhamad

Abstract This chapter examines the line that countries and their respective higher education institutions must walk when developing and implementing accreditation systems. Through a case study of the University of Bahrain, this chapter provides an overview of Bahrain's national higher education system before moving into an analysis of the multiple, conflicting, and complementing characteristics of national and international accreditation schemes and processes. Through surveys and interviews with faculty and administrators at all levels across a single, this chapter illustrates the issues of success, or challenge, at the local level. While the implementation of both international and national schemes is advocated for, the study illustrates the need to carefully weigh the balance between the desired outcomes and the demands that implementing multiple systems and schemes places on the faculty and administrators who are held to account for not only implementation but also the results.

3.1 Introduction

Quality Assurance in Higher Education is a major trend in most of the developed and the developing countries (Central European University, 2016; ENQA et al., 2015; Friend-Pereira, Lutz, & Heerens, 2002; Mavil, 2013; NIAD-UE, 2012; Ryan, 2015). Countries develop their quality in higher education framework, depending on their standing positions from quality (The World Bank, 2010). Countries shape their own frameworks toward satisfying their future needs, overcoming their challenges, and integrating within the cultural and managerial framework of the country (The_World_Bank, 2010). The challenges of quality assurance in higher education are better faced and overcome if the country has clear directions headed to a defined vision. The framework of satisfying future needs and overcoming challenges are

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_3

identified by the national expertise within the country itself; however, they are also supported with the international expertise and networks, such as UNESCO, INQAAHE, ANQAHE, Bologna process, Tuning, who support the quality assurance framework of the higher education institutes (CECCAR, 2012; Dill, 2010; Gallagher, 2010; Vance, 2008). The quality assurance agencies or/and the higher education council within the countries are the main drivers for quality in higher education. Regional and International Networks do support these national initiatives, hence keeping these quality reforms rolling.

Bahrain had taken serious actions to rebrand the image of higher education, through quality assurance systems including regulating bodies for higher education, developing bylaws, policies, and procedures that would ensure sustainability of quality in higher education in the short and long runs (Al-Alawi, Al-Kaabi, Rashdan, & Al-Khaleefa, 2009). Existing higher education institutes, consultants, expertise, and professional bodies have been incorporated in the development of quality. Having a well-placed quality system for education is one of the main goals to be achieved; however, sustaining it is another challenge that includes many factors. Fostering quality in higher education includes many players that include mainly the governmental bodies, private sectors, and nonprofit organizations. International reviews and accreditation played a role in creating the culture of quality (Alhamad & Aladwan, 2017); however, the national external quality assurance agency, in specific, the Bahrain Quality Assurance Agency of Education and Training (BQA) had the major contribution creating this paradigm shift toward quality in higher education (Almansoori, 2012). The Higher Education Council (HEC) had also shaped the ground of accreditation and to some extent, making data available to stakeholders.

This chapter presents the initiatives taken in the Kingdom of Bahrain, which has shifted its higher education to a better status, recognized nationally and internationally. As with all developments and enhancements, there are challenges within the current framework for quality in higher education. In this chapter, the challenges will be tackled in the sense of having a balanced approach between national and international review/accreditation. Initially, a brief understanding of the quality structure and system will be covered in the following section. Subsequently, challenges along with discussions and conclusions will be stated.

3.2 The National Higher Education System in Bahrain

Bahrain has taken serious actions in improving the quality of its education, and specifically, its higher education system. The main dependence was on the one university, namely, University of Bahrain established in 1986. It enrolls approximately 63% of the student population. Its roots date back to the late 1960s when the higher institutes for male and female teachers and the Gulf Technical College were established. The institutes later evolved into the University College of Arts, Sciences, and Education in accordance with Amiri decree no. (11) for 1978. The Gulf Technical College was later renamed the Gulf Polytechnic by Amiri Decree no. (2) of 1981

(Madany, 1988). As Bahrain shifted to a new era with the rulership of his Majesty, King Hamad, in 1999, and with the establishment of the Economic Development Board (EDB), among six identified priorities, education was seen as a key element toward economic development. By the beginning of 2000, ten private universities had opened their doors, funded by either local or foreign investors (AlSaleh, 2008; Karolak, 2012). This despite the absence of higher education relations. The low standards of education in many institutions have led to the increasing demand for formal supervision of their activities. Demand for universities to manage the quality of their graduates and academic programs grew as well. Moreover, international agencies, such as UNESCO, the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), also encouraged the adoption of quality assurance in developing countries where higher education had expanded rapidly (Al-Alawi et al., 2009). In response to the growing demand for quality assurance from both Bahraini universities and international agencies, the Higher Education Council (HEC) was established by the Bahraini government in 2006. The National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance for Education and Training (NAQQAET) was formed in 2008 (Alhamad & Aladwan, 2017), which is considered to be an independent body with no conflicts of interest that oversees performance and quality of education.

Limited regulations for the operation of higher education were present until the establishment of the Higher Education Council in 2006. The HEC is a regulatory body for controlling and maintaining quality in higher education, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education. The establishment of the HEC itself took time in its formation and collection of data. The HEC relied more on collecting data, running surveys, developing standards and frameworks, following up on implementation plans, and developing strategies. The HEC has issued a decree that forces private universities to fulfill the rules and regulations related to Academic and Administrative Bylaws within 1 year, and the requirements of building and infrastructure within 3 years (Davidson & Smith, 2008). The Bahrain EDB, the lead government agency for planning and executing strategies to enhance Bahrain's position as a global business center and grow Bahrain's economy, supported this movement with workshops for senior officials representing all universities in Bahrain (EDB, 2017). The workshops were simply covering the concepts of quality through self-evaluation processes, which were a requirement for submission (Karolak, 2012). The UNDP supported a series of workshops arranged by the Quality Assurance Agency of the United Kingdom for the purpose of evaluating specific programs at different colleges. This started in 2002 for the bachelor degree programs in computer science, chemical engineering, accounting, and postgraduate diploma in education, all of which demonstrated positive results in general (Davidson & Smith, 2008).

Institutional and program reviews started with the establishment of the Bahrain Quality Assurance Agency of Education and Training (BQA) in 2008. It is still mainly operated by BQA. This agency benchmarked at various levels and stages all its activities in developing the review framework (Alhamad & Aladwan, 2017; Alhamad & Aladwan, 2018). The reviews were used by the HEC to regulate and manage HEIs. The HEC signed an agreement with British Accreditation Council in

2015 to build the institutional accreditation standards, and to build the trust in the HEIs (Alhamad & Aladwan, 2017; Alhamad & Aladwan, 2018) as the BAC was recognized for accrediting private HEIs in the United Kingdom (ENQA, 2015).

Within this same period starting from 2005, the University of Bahrain also supported the development of a quality system for HEIs. The UNDP reviews were applied to three programs: BSc in Chemical Engineering in the College of Engineering, BSc in Computer Science in the College of IT, and the BSc in Accounting in the College of Business. As stated, the programs demonstrated positive results. These reviews and workshops supported the idea of quality in programs. The University of Bahrain has also sent representatives to a series of activities arranged by the British Council on quality assurance and enhancement. Such workshops included a workshop held in Abu Dhabi in 2005, the "Gulf states study tours" in London during December 2006, and the "methods and approaches to institutional audit" seminars held in Kuwait in January 2007 (Davidson & Smith, 2008).

With the emerging sector of international accreditation, the College of Engineering started to explore accreditation by American Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). This was also the beginning of the trend for international accreditation in the GCC countries. Accreditation gained by the College of Engineering, which was followed directly by the College of IT, supported the movement of quality in higher education. The expertise within the country and the expertise built within the university, supported the development of the quality system in BQA and HEC. The University of Bahrain (the main government university) and Al-Ahlia University (a private university) were involved in a process of pilot testing an institutional review to develop the indicators and the process evaluation for quality assurance by the Australian Universities Quality Agency, with support from the Economic Development Board in Bahrain. This was managed by BQA. The University of Bahrain continued gaining international accreditation/equivalence reviews from various review and international accreditation bodies, such as accreditation by AACSB and NAAB in 2011, as well as review by NIE and ABA (Al-Alawi et al., 2009; QAAC, 2016).

The BQA finished its first cycle of review of most programs in Bahrain, covering mainly undergraduate programs. The second cycle of review started in 2012 to cover most of the programs in the HEIs. This meant that each program will be reviewed once in every cycle. The BQA started its third cycle of reviews in 2018. Every review has a follow-up plan plus follow-up reviews depending on the outcome of the review. Despite the review cycles conducted by BQA, and the new review cycles of institutional accreditation by the HEC, the HEIs also have their own internal cycles of reporting and review. HEIs have also internal plans in gaining institutional accreditation in order to secure additional benefits beyond those provided through national review or accreditation (Alhamad, 2017a, 2017b, 2018). This placed continuous pressure on institutes to carry out internal reviews, or any kind of international accreditation projects. Such activities require a comprehensive self-assessment process, reports with extensive evidence, visits with action plans, and so on. As in a UNESCO publication, (Alhamad & Aladwan, 2017, 2018), the HEI should depend mainly on their IQA system, whereas the EQA system should be considered for monitoring and support.

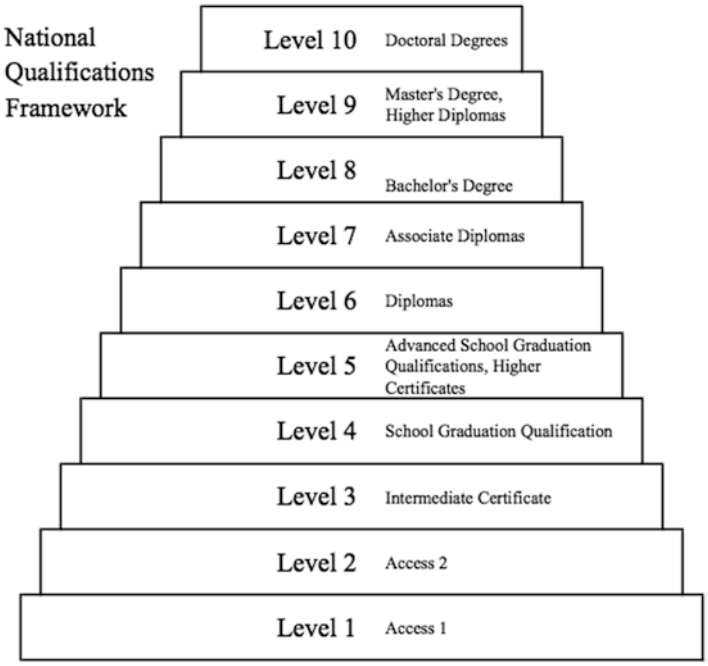

Fig. 3.1 National qualifications framework levels (Al-Sindi & Jaffar, 2018)

The BQA launched the National Qualification Framework project in 2014. The aim of the national qualifications framework (NQF) is to ensure the design, consistency, and clarity of Bahrain's qualifications in order to meet national and international requirements (BQA, 2017). The NQF was established by the Supreme Council for Education and Training Reform in 2012. Stakeholders, such as private and public HEIs, employers, and government bodies have also been engaged in working groups to develop the NQF. The framework allowed for the 10 NQF levels to be aligned with national and international qualifications, as described in Fig. 3.1 (BQA, 2017). The NQF had a significant role in promoting quality in qualifications and institutions (Al-Sindi & Jaffar, 2018).

3.3 National and International Accreditation

The University of Bahrain managed to build a solid quality system that satisfies its needs; however, additional requirements from three different quality assurance bodies, two of which are national and the third is international, created a considerable burden on the faculty members. Faculty members, chairs, and a group of deans stated that the faculty members were overburdened with the requirements of the quality assurance bodies, namely, of Quality Assurance of Education and Training (BQA) and the Higher Education Council (HEC), which were limiting concentration

on future plans. The university has been institutionally reviewed by two national quality assurance bodies. The College of Health Sciences underwent program review through two national quality assurance bodies, the BQA and the HEC, as well as through an external health organization body, the World Health Organization (WHO). The College of IT had undergone two quality assurance requirements: a program in college review and qualification placement. In addition, the College of IT gained the accreditation from Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), and recently passed the second cycle review.

BQA implements program reviews, institutional reviews, and qualification placements, as well as institutional listing on the National Qualifications Framework. The HEC currently runs institutional reviews and has plans to implement program reviews in the future. Concurrently, higher education institutions are pursuing international accreditation through various international accreditation bodies. These requirements imply that a higher education institute would submit a self-evaluation report and undergo a visit for every national or international review or accreditation process. Despite the requirements by national standards, there are gains from international accreditation processes (Alhamad, 2017a, 2017b, 2018). As balancing between national and international reviews and accreditation processes is difficult due to the demands from both the review and accreditation processes, the gains from the international perspective will be missed.

Taking an example in a glance, the University of Bahrain (UoB) sought international accreditation for a group of colleges, where it achieved accreditation for approximately 40% of its bachelor's degree programs. In a two-year span, the College of IT underwent reviews for the renewal of international accreditation by the American Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), the program in college review by BQA, and the qualifications mapping of its programs on the NQF. Here, it should be noted that there were three self-evaluation reports (SER) plus three visits in addition to follow-up activities and action plans conducted over a two-year period. Within a three-year period, the College of Business (Alhamad & Aladwan, 2017; Al-Khalifa, 2016) achieved international accreditation, underwent program reviews by the BQA, and gained qualification placement on the NQF. Department heads from various colleges stated that the effort to prepare a SER is a good practice, but doing it twice or three times for the same reason makes it a concern, and could have a drawback effect on the effectiveness of the program, (Alhamad, 2017a).

There is limited coordination of program and institutional reviews between the BQA and HEC. For example, the College of Health Sciences was reviewed twice by BQA and HEC in July, 2012. Efforts of coordination are been organized through joint committees, but not yet integrated. There is also a cycle of review for each of these requirements. The HEC requires a progress report, and a visit every year to follow-up on action plans. BQA similarly at institutional and program level also follows on visits annually. It is understandable that these are part of an education reform; hence, follow-ups are essential to close the loop. However, the sacrifice for international accreditation is not accepted. Follow-ups and cycles of review should be revisited and investigated.

As to the definition of quality assurance, they are the minimum requirements for an institution to achieve and abide by. A minimum does not provide a competitive

edge for the HEI. International accreditation brings on experts to review the program based on general and program-specific standards that reflects international trends related to the field and not the minimum requirements generally, which are not directly related to the field. International accreditation helps in building the education system for such fields as law, health care, and engineering. It also helps to build the IQA system, which is a requirement of the internal quality assurance requirements set forth by BQA and HEC. This is not a call against national trends, as they remain the main basis of the higher education development, as well as provide the directions toward national needs to achieve goals within a defined mission and vision. The call is to allow for that balance that would support HEIs to grow faster and have a competitive role within the region. That balance should be defined by the policy makers and accreditors.

3.4 Research Methodology

A 2015–2016 study was conducted by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC) at University of Bahrain, tested the effect of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and External Quality Assurance (EQA) tools. A questionnaire was distributed to all staff members within the university, covering approximately 800 faculty members and 1000 administrative staff members. The number of respondents for the academic staff was 191 academic members, and 204 administrative staff members, representing 24% of the academic staff, and 20.4% of administrative staff members.

Interviews and Focus groups included key questions to measure the effectiveness of the IQA tools on teaching and learning, employability, and management. Interviews and Focus groups were conducted with key stakeholders, including the Vice President for Academic Programs and Graduate Studies; Vice President for Information Technology, Administration and finance; Member of the University Council (Governing Board); Dean of College of Science; Dean of College of Social Sciences; Dean of College of Health Sciences; Department Chair and Program Coordinators of Marketing and Management; Department Chairs and Program Coordinators of Physics and Biology; and Department Chair and Program Coordinator of English Language. A focus group was also conducted with a group of students at the university. Internal statistical data will be used as a source in the study.

Part of the results from surveys and interviews will be used to explore the benefits of national and international accreditation.

3.4.1 Data Collection from Survey and Interviews and Analysis

From the survey, 88.9% of the academic respondents and 76.9% of the administrative respondents indicated that overall, there are benefits of internal quality assurance tools and procedures, 89.7% of the academic respondents and 79.5% of the administrative respondents suggested that overall, there is a workload with internal

quality assurance tools at the university. Out of 89.7% (academic) and 79.5% (administrative), 78.6% (academic) and 70.5% (administrative) judged the overall workload as high and moderate, while 11.1% (academic) and 9% (administrative) found that it is low.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Graduate Studies noted that the focus on quality began in the 2003–2004 academic year, when the university passed through a QA training and program review with UNDP, ABET and other accreditation bodies for introducing outcome-based assessment (Alhamad & Mohieldein, 2013). The vice president stated that a structure was developed by forming the University Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC) in 2009–2010. The Dean of the College of Health Sciences (CHS) mentioned that they learned from the international reviews by the WHO, which helped them to have a solid foundation in curriculum.

The Dean of Science, Arts and the Dean of IT mentioned examples of closing the loop, with improvements conducted in courses and programs. Analysis of the assessment results, surveys, self-evaluation reports, and advisory committee discussions are used to improve the teaching performance, learning conditions, and study programs. The Dean of IT stated that their status of full confidence by BQA review and the qualification placement on NQF is rooted in their initial quality culture that was built during their previous reviews by ABET. The Vice President for Information Technology, Administration and Finance stated that the university is distinct in its system, in the sense that there are clear quality policies and procedures that support quality of teaching and learning systems.

Interviewees underscored the main developmental steps of the IQA system at the university, started through the first international accreditation by ABET, followed by the creation of the University QAAC. The vice presidents and deans stated that the effectiveness of the university's IQA system was conditioned by the local quality assurance authority BQA and by international accreditation.

The various stakeholder groups were in agreement as to the positive effect of external quality assurance in improving and supporting the university's internal quality assurance. BQA's role, in areas such as institutional review and program accreditation, was viewed very positively by the university leaders, as was the role of international accreditation. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the deans of the faculties of Science, Health Sciences, and Arts, noted that the external quality assurance system imposed by BQA included compliance with the demands of the national qualifications framework (NQF), as well as requirement of program and institutional reviews. These were identified as key elements influencing the IQA system at UoB. For example, the Dean of the Faculty of Science reported that the Physics Department had established ILOs for its courses through the NQF exercise. The Dean of Arts remarked that course ILOs were modified to align with the assessment activities of NAQQAET and to satisfy NQF thresholds.

It is noted that the most effective IQA tools at the university are the ones that were initially developed at the international accreditation stage due to the absence of any External Quality Assurance (EQA) national reviews, either by HEC or BQA. Further reviews by BQA in particular, and HEC, enhanced the IQA system,

especially regarding governance, and the standardization of the level of the courses and the programs.

Conversely, the stakeholder groups pointed out a number of negative effects. They stated that the amount of data to be collected and analyzed for the review process was extensive. The Dean of IT stated that within a two-year period, the college underwent reviews for the renewal of the international accreditation by ABET, program in college review by BQA, and the placement of the programs on the NQF. The College of Business went through international accreditation, program reviews by BQA, and NQF placement within 3 years. The department heads from various colleges stated that the effort to prepare a self-evaluation report is a good practice, but doing it twice or three times for the same reason makes it a concern and could have drawbacks on program's effectiveness.

The Director of QAAC noted that the international accreditation practices assisted in developing the exact needs for the programs, as international accrediting bodies are more specialized toward the programs to be accredited. In addition, international accreditation bodies helped in developing the IQA tools and building an IQA system and structure. The Director of QAAC mentioned that the review by BQA was a key for enhancement, which is also in agreement with the deans and the VP. However, he stated that the enhancement was generic and not strategically affecting the direction of the program.

Summarizing, UoB was undergoing international accreditation for a group of colleges, where it achieved accreditation to about 40% of its bachelor's degree programs. The challenge was to cope with reviews by BQA and international accreditation at the same time. The challenge then increased with the initiation of NQF project, which meant that colleges that were internationally accredited and had gained full confidence of BQA were also requested to submit for qualification placement on the NQF. Even more challenging, the HEC started playing a role in both institutional and program reviews. Moreover, all reviews and audits by the three mentioned EQA agencies have a time spam of 5–6 years, which are followed by continuous annual visits in order to follow-up on recommendations. Analyzing the situation, colleges would need to sacrifice pursuit of international accreditation, which is not a national requirement. That is, not imposed. However, it is of great importance for programs to find themselves internationally recognized and increase its business opportunities. Here, EQA agencies are hindering exposure to international networks and could cause drawbacks in the quality of the programs. Faculty members, who are the key players in all review and audit processes sacrifice quality of teaching in order to satisfy the requirements of the EQA agencies. Both interview and survey results revealed that the academic and administrative staff found that there is an overall workload due to implementation of IQA system.

3.5 Comparative Analysis

A comparison showing the benefits between national and international accreditation is shown in the following Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Comparison between National and International Accreditation

	National accreditation/Recognition	International accreditation
Helps build the IQA system	Yes Organization and representation of the data ✓ Policies—program curriculum, study and exam, teaching and learning, assessment and moderation, etc. ✓ Governance and structure—(depends on the standards of the EQA system)	Yes ✓ Organization and representation of the data ✓ Policies—program curriculum, study and exam, teaching and learning, assessment and moderation, etc. Governance and structure **?** Governance and structure (usually does not attempt to change the governance or structure)
Quality of curriculum structure	✓ Experts review the program based on general standards only	✓ Experts review the program based on general and subject specific standards
Follows international trends in future (program specific)	**?** Depends on the national strategic needs and trends (if exists)	International priority—however may not be a national priority
Meets National Needs	Yes **?** Depends on the national strategic needs and trends (if exists)	**?** Usually not or includes a standard that states that the institution satisfies national needs
Prestige status	Depends on the level of National Quality System in the country	Yes
Academic reputation	✓ Good academic reputation, and may help in cross border education if internal system is strong and well recognized	✓ Good academic reputation, and helps in cross border education
Transfer of credit, and the widest possible acceptance by other universities.	✓ It helps, however at the national level	✓ It helps in transfer of credits, especially when talking about cross border education
Research	**?** Depends on the national goals/priorities—it will be of a low concern if it is not a national priority **?** Depends on the standards—current standards by BQA put very minor consideration towards research, except for what is contributing towards the quality of the graduate	**?** Usually not critical, and may gain accreditation with minimal efforts in research or research output
Employability	✓ Yes, and is critically looked into—However, there are difficulties to obtain this type of data	**?** Yes, but general data about employability is sufficient—not critical

(continued)

Table 3.1 (continued)

	National accreditation/Recognition	International accreditation
Market needs	✓ Yes, as it is a national review—BQA reviews and to a higher concern the NQF project ensure that market needs are surveyed and opinions of stakeholders in this concern are considered	**?** Do not consider market needs in its reviews
Satisfaction of graduates	✓ Definitely considered, and the program should have the required tools—The level of graduates' satisfaction is measured, and if it a low level, it may fail the program	✓ Considered generally, and the program should have the required tools to measure the satisfaction of graduates, but not critical in succeeding or failing
Judgment	✓ The judgment provides more details within a three of four scale	✓ The judgment is usually accredited or not accredited
Teaching and learning	✓ Essential and critical for success	✓ Essential and critical for success
Assessment	✓ Essential and critical for success	✓ Essential and critical for success
Level of standards (easy go/detailed/minimum requirements)	**?** Usually includes detailed standards requiring that all programs should satisfy the same requirements, as variety of program delivery is not expected	Minimum requirements—depends on the accreditation body—considers the variety of programs from one country to another
Objective of the EQA (profession, marketing, control, compliance, improvement)	✓ Usually is one of the following: control, compliance, improvement, clean-up degree mills	✓ Usually is one of the following: profession leading in best practices, marketing, improvement,
Dedication of faculty	✓ High (depends on the consequences) such as failure of the program could mean faculty members losing their jobs	✓ High (depends on the consequences), for example, if it is a well-known accreditation body, this will provide motivation to succeed that will in turn add to the CV of the faculty members
Different accreditation body/different system	✓ Definitely will fit the country's system	**?** May not fit the country's system in the profession (e.g. Law, Health Care)
Accreditation body of a professional nature that includes best practices	**?** It will help building the system, however may not have the best practices for the specialization or profession. Trial and error may result in a mis-trust in the system	✓ Helps to build up the system based on the best practices for the specialization and profession. It defines the stakeholders, tools, systems, IT infrastructure, etc.
Faster to develop—Start from where others stopped	**?** Need extensive efforts with all stakeholders and constituents to develop the system—would go through cycles of implementation and improvements in the system	✓ Best practices taken from over the shelf—it is like a short cut towards implementing best practices

(continued)

Table 3.1 (continued)

	National accreditation/Recognition	International accreditation
Cost	✓ Usually for free and it is not a request to ask for- if costs are incurred, they are meant to covers logistics mainly	**?** Usually expensive to request for international visits to seek accreditation/recognition
Consistency	✓ Consistent all over the programs and HEIs as general standards apply for all programs	✓ Different for different programs or HEIs. Accreditation bodies are subject specific
Confidence and credibility	✓ Takes time to get this confidence and credibility—usually it takes 5 years to start gaining this confidence. It depends on the follow-up action by EQA Agencies and the impact of the quality system	✓ High—as the standards and tools had been tested and proved success all over the region or internationally
Good marketing tool	✓ Low to Medium—depends on the national EQA system, but it takes time	✓ High—depends on the international accreditation body
Waiting list	✓ Put in the pipeline	✓ Ready for business
Creates competition	✓ Normal, but could be high if the national quality system reviews had built the confidence with the stakeholders	✓ High

Reviewing the table above, international accreditation is beneficial due to the following reasons:

- Exposure to international networks.
- Builds database and indicators for program and university performance.
- International expertise and International trainers.
- Well-developed system with best practices.
- More prestigious and better for marketing.
- Higher confidence and more credibility? Conversely, it also depends on the history and maturity of the national quality system.
- Defines the best practices for the specialization and profession. This includes detailed guide to build the curriculum, defining the stakeholders and the type of interactions. It also defines the IT infrastructure, facilities, and required library support.
- Defines the IQA tools, however not the system.
- Boosts the quality system within the country.
- The standards are subject specific, which means that it provides direct recommendations related to best practices in the profession.
- Provides a driving force for the faculty to work from a Job-CV extension perspective.

- It is easier and faster to develop the quality system, as universities benchmark their program, roles, and activities to meet the accreditation standards that had been proved and tested worldwide.
- However, the international accreditation has its pitfalls as well.
- Good for the short run in terms of a quality system.
- Expensive.
- May not build local expertise within the country.
- Does not consider national trends/needs/priorities that keeps the country on the competitive edge based on its capabilities, features, expertise, etc.
- Does not tackle research from research perspective, but tackles it from the point of view of being current.
- Drive toward international needs, which usually covers developed countries and not the developing ones, hence may overcome the national strategic vision. Drives toward following rather than leading by having a competitive edge.
- Does not attempt to build the IQA structure but provides all the tools to build that quality system.
- Employability and market needs are investigated to measure the level of programs' fulfillment to the expected levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for the profession.

In comparison, national accreditation can be beneficial due to the following reasons:

- Emphasizes governance and structures.
- Considers national trends/needs/priorities that keeps the country on the competitive edge based on its capabilities, features, expertise, etc.
- Tackles research as a key aspect for advancement.
- Drives toward national and strategic needs, which may include the international aspect into it.
- Requires building an IQA structure and system.
- Better for the long run, as it may build local expertise. Can be sustainable if initially benchmarked as well as quality assured internally and externally.
- Considers governance and may comment heavily on governance.
- Provides a driving force for the faculty to work from a job-security perspective.
- Raises confidence for benchmarking against similar programs globally.
- However, there are pitfalls with national reviews/accreditation as well:
- May miss international and global trends.
- Usually not subject specific.
- No international expertise to train the faculty and staff.
- Trial and error toward a developed mature system could mean that people may lose interest on the way, and hence creating considerable resistance.
- May be less prestigious, or of less credibility. It depends on the culture of the people, history of quality, level of the quality system, maturity level, etc.
- Requests to define the stakeholders in general and not specifically to the needs of the program.

3.6 Conclusions

International accreditation requirements help the higher education institute maintain a recognized level through a good curriculum structure, reasonable teaching and learning capabilities, acceptable and safe facilities, adequate faculty staff members, best practices in networking with stakeholders. All of these areas should be at a minimum level for being successful and to be recognized at an international level. With that said, they may not be at the expected level in order to satisfy national needs and strategic trends. Both national and international accreditation processes help the university to form and standardize these tools, and support in building the internal quality assurance system for the university. If an EQA system is in its mature stages, international accreditation would be essential to drive the changes and apply best practices.

A national quality assurance system ensures management of standards, policies, and procedures. It also maintains the uniformity of quality development across programs, thereby maximizing the overall benefits of the IQA system.

Both national and international accreditation ensure spreading culture, having data-driven decisions, and systematic link with industries. Referring to research, both accreditations put less emphasis on this activity; the higher concentration is on teaching. International accreditation could be an interim measure or a driver to ensure the effective functioning of quality assurance in HEIs. The national trends add important ingredients, which are critical to the success of the HEIs, specifically, to have the direction, and to see the direction. Being accredited is not the end of the story, but it is a journey toward national goals and objectives. National accreditation considers employability and market needs as key success factors and may affect review judgement to be fulfilling the requirements or not.

International accreditations provide subject-specific standards that do differ with most national standards that are generic. It is not a notion of good or bad, rather that the ingredient of each dimension is utilized with one another, or a balanced or an integrated approach that would achieve both. International accreditation would also help in cross-border education. However, it is very expensive and does not provide a sustainable approach for the whole education system.

Both accreditations provide the minimum standards to be achieved. They both do not build a strategy for higher education that would reflect on the economy of the country, though both do serve toward that direction if defined and managed.

A balance should be maintained to drive the HEI toward national trends and having the latest international practices as well the international status and recognition, and through defined and sustainable processes and systems. A competitive edge could be achieved with the balance and knowledge of how and when to utilize each process.

Finally, the external quality assurance agencies played an important role on one hand in driving the programs to implement the IQA tools, and on the other hand on enhancing the governance and structure and developing new policies and procedures to meet the standards. IQA is pulled by the minimum standards to be achieved and is generally applied to all programs. However, the international accreditation

practice was more specific to the program, hence recommendations provided is pulled by the future of the area of specialization. International accreditation was a key to developing the IQA system at the university. The IQA system was reassured by the BQA in its reviews and was further enhanced from best practices formulated in the BQA institutional and program review standards and then articulated in the university's IQA system. Having the ingredient of the best practices known by the international accreditation bodies could be utilized through channels that have their eyes on national needs and future directions. Those channels could be done by the professional bodies. Being misguided by international accreditation could be an issue, especially, if the national system is not in place.

There should be some form of coordination, partnership, or integration of program and institutional reviews between the BQA and HEC. Workloads should be managed to allow for maximum benefits of both directions of accreditation.

Acknowledgments The author wishes to express his appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of this project, in particular, the co-researcher Mrs. Rama Aladwan. Special thanks go to IIEP-UNESCO, for their support, and specifically to Mrs. Michaela Martin, research coordinator of the IIEP-UNESCO project on internal quality assurance for her outstanding work and support.

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Chapter 4
The Case of the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation: US Specialized Accreditation as a Response to the Increasing Demand for Quality Assurance in Foreign Language Education

Mary Reeves

Abstract The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) is the US specialized accreditor in the field of English language programs and institutions. As worldwide demand for quality assurance in higher education grew, international interest in CEA's accreditation process for English language programs also grew. In 2004, following study, CEA began to conduct accreditation activities outside the United States, primarily in the Middle East. This chapter describes what distinguishes US accreditation and what must be considered when an accreditation system is "exported." CEA's decision to expand its scope to include international accreditation required analysis of the transferability of the principles of peer-review and decision-making, the nature of the accreditor's relationship to the specialized professional field, the need for separate standards for international settings, and the agency's capacity to operate internationally. The results of CEA's decisions and resulting international accreditation activities are provided.

4.1 Introduction

A quality assurance (QA) project in a higher education setting can be framed in various ways, depending on the underlying reasons for the initiative, the stakeholders, and the desired, expected, or required outcomes. A university seeking to ensure that all services and programs are aligned with the institution's mission and vision, operationally sound, and verifiably contributing to the institution's goals may have an institutional office of QA that shapes, if not governs through institutional audits, the structure of services and educational programs. A government ministry that

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_4

needs to ensure that universities, colleges, and other schools are providing good quality education and training so that students can capably join the national workforce may require that schools meet government-established principles of operation and that they provide evidence that students are successfully acquiring the needed competencies. Professional fields whose practitioners are currently engaged in a discipline and that collectively embody the necessary and current knowledge content of a discipline have a stake in ensuring that good quality educational programs in the discipline exist, provide curricula that cover and assess relevant content, and prepare students to pass external licensing exams. These are but a few of the many drivers and actors that shape QA initiatives and the choice about what kind of QA approach to adopt.

Accreditation is one model of quality assurance. Although the term "accreditation" is sometimes used broadly to denote any general QA process, with "accredited" being the resulting mark of approval of an institution or program, accreditation as used here refers to a specific set of practices that originated in the United States, though now widely adapted to other national and international settings. This prototype accreditation process comprises standards developed by peer professionals in consultation with their greater professional public, the institution's self-assessment of compliance with the standards, onsite verification of the self-assessment by a team of peers, an award of accredited status as determined by a council or commission of elected or appointed peers, and follow-up status checks to ensure ongoing compliance and continuous program improvement. The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA, www.cea-accredit.org) is the US specialized accreditor in the field of English language programs and institutions. Founded in the 1990s, CEA initially accredited only US-based institutions and programs. However, as worldwide demand for QA in higher education grew, international interest in CEA's accreditation process for English language programs also grew, and in 2004, CEA began to conduct accreditation activities outside the United States, primarily in the Middle East. In 2018, of CEA's 340+ accredited sites, 23 are located outside the United States. This chapter describes what distinguishes US accreditation and what must be considered when an accreditation system is "exported." It then focuses on how CEA as the US specialized accreditor responded to the demand for accreditation of English language programs in international settings by expanding its scope to include international accreditation actions and the results of that initiative.

4.2 US Accreditation's Reach in International Settings

Accreditation in the United States began in 1885 with the founding of the first accreditation association for institutions. The accreditation process as now commonly framed—self-study based on standards, verified by a site visit of peers, with an accreditation decision made by a commission or council—emerged in the 1950s. From inception, US accreditation and US higher education co-evolved, and as needs

within and for postsecondary education changed and grew, accreditation bodies changed, grew or emerged as well. (For a concise summary of the history of US accreditation, see Ewell, 2008). Now, after 150 years of growth and evolution, the US model of accreditation as a form of quality assurance is "the oldest and most pervasive form of quality review of higher education in the United States and in the world, with more than 8,300 institutions and 24,000 programs currently accredited" (Council for Higher Education Accreditation [CHEA], 2018). US accreditation agencies now exist that serve three categories of educational entities: seven institutional accreditors, dubbed the "regionals" because they originated as geographical consortia, accredit degree-granting colleges and universities; 10 "nationals", institutional accreditors that accredit schools that offer a variety of vocational and career training courses, programs, and degrees; and approximately 70 specialized (professional, or programmatic) accreditors that accredit discipline-specific programs within accredited institutions. Some specialized accreditors also accredit freestanding institutions in their entirety if the institution is fully discipline-specific, such as a private English language school or a school that trains paraprofessionals for a health field.

As globalization of higher education has accelerated, cross-border and internationalization of higher education in its many forms has brought an accompanying demand for effective quality assurance systems appropriate to their international contexts. Beyond the simple transfer of their accreditation activities into international settings, US accreditation agencies have been challenged in recent critiques of accreditation to incorporate reforms and innovations to "keep pace with the development of higher education as a multinational enterprise" (Green, 2018, pp. 172). In response, US accreditors have actively analyzed their appropriate positions relative to conducting accreditation activities internationally. Some decline to engage internationally for practical reasons (such as limited resources) as well as in acknowledgement that a given accreditation system may not operate as intended in an international context (such as an accreditor having standards that reflect US state licensing exams). In 2012–2013, six of the seven US regional institutional accreditors accredited outside the United States under certain conditions, and in the aggregate accredit 41 institutions, with a range of 2–16 accredited institutions each. A total of 46 US accreditation agencies accredited 1077 institutions, programs, and courses in 84 countries (CHEA Almanac Online, 2018). Although a small number in comparison to the 18,000 higher education institutions worldwide, higher education analysts expect continuing demand for US accreditation agencies to operate in global higher education environments, a demand that US accreditors may or may not embrace (Green, 2018).

Regarding specialized accreditation of disciplines and specific subjects (such as English language education), 34 of the approximately 70 US specialized accreditors report including international accreditation in their scope. These 34 specialized accreditors accredit a total 954 programs and institutions outside the United States. The vast majority of these, 795, are provided by a small subset of accreditors that are highly active internationally. The first profession-specific accreditors to accredit in international settings were those related to engineering and business, and these

specialized accreditors continue to be deeply engaged in international accreditation. Three business school and program accreditors accredited 428 programs in aggregate; ABET (www.abet.org), the accrediting body for engineering and certain other technology science programs, accredited 367 programs. Although no single health-professions-related accreditor accredits a large number of programs and institutions internationally, in total 11 health-related accreditors accounted for 40 international accreditations. Of the 34 US specialized accreditors reporting international accreditation activities, 20 accredit less than five international sites, and many accredit only one or two. CEA's 23 international accreditation actions for English language programs is fifth highest among the 34 US specialized accreditors (CHEA Almanac Online, 2018).

With the co-evolution of global higher education and the demand for effective QA agencies, the question of how to judge the quality of the agencies themselves legitimately arises. In the United States, the US Department of Education conducts a recognition system that functions as a form of accountability gatekeeper and is one mark of public confidence in the operational soundness, transparency, and effectiveness of the recognized accreditor. The US system of accreditation was not historically designed to address accreditation of international locations; however, now, discussion of improvements and reforms of the US accreditation system necessarily incorporates consideration of operating abroad and whether it is necessary (or desirable) for the US accreditation arena to have a single clear definition of what US accreditation means outside the US context. At present, accreditors decide their own approaches (or decline to engage in international accreditation actions) based on a variety of factors—among them agency resources, transferability of subject matter to the international setting, strategic focus, and international demand. Some opt to formalize memoranda of understanding with the national QA bodies in other countries, or to establish mutual recognition protocols by which accrediting bodies agree to accept each other's decisions. Green (2018) notes that at present, US accreditors appear to have limited interest in a "global meta-accreditor or mutual recognition of QA/accreditation agencies" at the institutional level (p. 188). However, "mutual recognition at the program level, especially in the professional and scientific fields, is a more likely route for the United States" (p. 188).

Networks of QA organizations have also gained relevance in establishing good practice in international QA and accreditation systems. These organizations allow participants to share information, guidance, and good practice in international accreditation. Notable examples include the CHEA International Quality Group (CHEA CIQG, www.chea.org/about-ciqg), which stages conferences and colloquia, publishes papers, and grants awards, and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE, www.inqaahe.org), an association of nearly 300 organizations worldwide focused on theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education, which has published *Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance* addressing creation of new QA organizations and evaluating existing ones.

4.3 Considerations When Adopting/Adapting a US Accreditation System

When an accreditation agency analyzes whether to begin operating in an international context, factors from the philosophical to the practical must be considered. US accreditation developed in a particular historical, regulatory, and cultural context. The resulting inner workings and standards of the accreditation agency may or may not be a fit for every, or any, other national context. Naturally, accreditors that seek to be active internationally must consider country- and culture-specific matters, including local/national governmental requirements and needs for the institutions they review and may need to adjust their policies, procedures, standards, and expected outcomes accordingly. For specialized accreditors, this interface with local/national quality expectations is eased somewhat, as the most active specialized accreditors (engineering, business, health professions) already operate in areas of professional practice that have general technical standards and baselines regarding student and program outcomes.

Beyond quality principles per se, four characteristics of US accreditation have implications when considering whether and how a US accreditation system can operate effectively outside the United States. These are that (1) US accreditation is not government-sponsored, (2) it is mission-based, (3) it is founded on principles of self-study and peer review, and, (4) among specialized accreditors, the relationship with the relevant professional field is simultaneously close and distant.

4.3.1 Not Government Sponsored

As often noted at the outset of any overview of US accreditation, "The United States has no ministry of education, so it lacks the kind of government-sponsored approach to quality assurance that is typical in most other countries" (Ewell, 2008, pp. 3). Rather, US accrediting agencies are voluntary organizations composed of and governed by peer institutions and individuals committed to educational quality. Although the US government did not have a role in the founding of accreditation in the United States, Ewell (2008) notes that "once created, accrediting organizations were put to uses not originally foreseen by their founders but for which they were available and appeared reasonably suited" (p. 17). Thus, starting in the 1940s, accreditation agencies, as existing accountability gatekeepers, were drawn into relationships with the US government, primarily as a means to identify which colleges and universities were of sufficient quality and capacity to participate in the US federal student aid programs. The US Higher Education Act of 1965 established criteria for accreditors that performed this function, resulting in the US Department of Education (USDE) recognition process. The term "recognition" is the formal designation for an accreditation agency that has been favorably reviewed by USDE based on 83 criteria. All of the institutional accreditors (seven regionals and 10 nationals)

are recognized and approximately half of specialized accreditors (36 of 70+) are recognized, including CEA. This recognition system assigns significant importance to accreditation agencies; in 2017–2018, the US student grant and loan programs disbursed nearly $115 billion in federal expenditures to over 15 million students who must be enrolled in US colleges, universities, and schools that are accredited by recognized agencies (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Notably, CEA is the only recognized accreditor that does not engage with the US government through federal student loan programs. CEA's federal link is through the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), such that US institutions and programs accredited by CEA may become certified to issue the necessary documents for international students to study in the United States. In fact, intensive English programs and institutions in the United States that seek DHS certification are required by federal law, the Accreditation of English Language Training Programs Act of 2010 - the so-called "Accreditation Act" (Accreditation Act, 2013) - to be accredited by a USDE recognized accrediting agency. While it is a strength of the US model of accreditation that it provides an alternative to government regulation of higher education, the accreditor–government relationship is nonetheless inextricably intertwined, as few colleges and universities, as well as ESL programs, can operate without the services of an accreditation agency.

4.3.2 Mission-Based

Foundational to US accreditation is the principle that the government or the accreditation agency does not dictate the purpose or outcomes of the educational institution or program. Rather, the accreditor requires that an institution or program declares its mission and objectives and then applies standards that require evidence that the school meets its mission. This mission-objective approach is a QA philosophy; it posits that and allows for quality and compliance to come in many forms. It also has historical roots, as US accreditation agencies did not emerge wholly formed from QA projects with defined, prescribed, or required program or student outcomes. Further, this respect for mission is compelled in US legislation governing the recognition of accreditors, which specifies that a recognized accreditation agency "consistently applies and enforces standards that respect the stated mission of the institution of higher education" (Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, 2015). Language in the legislation also specifies that the accreditor may not require specific student achievement outcomes, but must have standards that require the accredited school to establish their own outcomes and achievement criteria and then document that they do so.

Among specialized accreditors, including CEA, this mission-based principle couples the institution's or program's own mission/objectives with the professional field's objectives, which together constitute a baseline for the interpretation and application of certain standards. This influence of the professional field can be seen in accreditation standards that do not prescribe specific practices and outcomes, but

require that a program or institution state how a practice achieves its mission and objectives within the norms of the field for the model of educational program offered, or similar language alluding to what defines acceptable practice in educational settings and areas of professional practice. For English language programs, for example, this respect for mission means that CEA standards do not dictate or reference a given proficiency level, test, or scale as part of student achievement requirements. The program or institution determines and defends what will best serve its mission and students.

4.3.3 Self-Study and Peer Review

Among the most defining characteristics of US accreditation is the principle of peer review and involvement at each stage of the process, from setting standards, governing the agency, and conducting verification visits, through making accreditation decisions. As an historical matter, Ewell (2008) notes that:

> As accreditation of institutions evolved and the mission-based approach replaced narrow quantitative standards used earlier in the [20th] century, that did not require professional judgment to apply, peer review became a must. Among programmatic [specialized] accreditors, site visit teams [comprised of peers] were common from the outset, though they frequently contained members of the professional practice community as well as representatives of other educational programs. (p. 75).

The government does not prescribe accreditors' standards; specialized accreditors rely on peer involvement in setting standards and professional competencies. Applicant programs then self-assess and undergo review by fellow subject matter experts. Vibert (2017) notes that peer review "guarantees that those who have actual and practical knowledge of the profession contribute across all aspects of the accreditation process, from development of profession-specific competencies and accreditation standards and policies through the review and decision making about accreditation status" (p. 2). Accreditation agencies themselves become sources of professional development for the field, providing a "constant movement between practice and review [that] means for accreditation a constant inflow of understanding of the circumstances and challenges" accredited sites face. Further, "judgment by a panel of peers tends to promote reasonableness"—a fit with the nonprescriptive nature of mission-based accreditation (Manning, 2018, p.22). Overall, peer review significantly increases the value of the review and the credibility of the accreditor's activities.

However, the reliance on peers for site reviews, decision-making, and the framing of standards also comes with risks. These include, but are not limited to, involved peers who may have a stake in the outcome of the accreditor's work, or who may not perform competently, properly prepare for their consequential work, or agree with the accreditor's standards and thus substitute personal preference or bias in decision-making. Accreditation agencies, particularly the specialized accreditors, are well-aware of these risks, and good practice in accreditation requires that accreditation

agencies have firmly established codes of conduct and policies requiring training of peers, including legal education regarding fiduciary responsibilities related to confidentiality, conflicts of interest, lack of bias, and loyalty to the mission and goals of the agency. Other layers of control ensure the integrity of the peer-driven accreditation model and mitigate possible weaknesses. Accreditation agencies in the United States are nonprofit corporations within US law, subject to an extensive body of legal requirement and good practice that specify the responsibilities of the board members of the corporation (accreditation commission members, in the case of accreditation agencies) and volunteers (peer reviewers, in this case) prohibiting conflicts of interest and violations of confidentiality among other things.

4.3.4 Relationship with the Relevant Professional Field

Another primary reason that specialized (programmatic) accreditation is premised on the peer review model is that specialized accreditation itself often reflects a professional field that is maturing, at which stage a profession establishes common values and standards and then self-regulates, often by launching an accreditation system. Because professional fields typically already have one or more functioning membership organizations, often with membership requirements akin to (or that are) standards, the expertise that the organizations hold will inform the new accrediting agency's standards. This linkage of specialized accrediting agencies and their professional fields and associations has significant advantages, including notions of standards, early buy-in by the professional field, and significant volunteer contribution, since support for the accreditor is a form of personal professional development as well as contribution to one's field.

As with peer review, the relationship between an accreditor and membership associations in the professional field carries risks as well as advantages. Accreditors cannot be controlled by any other organization and conflicts of interest must be assiduously avoided. In acknowledgment of the risks, provisions in the US law that governs USDE-recognized accrediting agencies require that they be separate and independent from any affiliated trade association or membership association. These regulations require that accreditors have processes in place to prevent quid pro quo accreditation actions, any self-dealing among associations, any appearance of being a club that approves its own members and rejects competing schools, or other abuses (U.S. Department of Education Guidelines, 2012). Provided these constraints are in place, the substantial advantages of peer review and appropriate relationships with professional association in specialized accreditation can flourish. When a US accreditor considers accrediting in international settings, the role of and constraints on peers and with professional associations must be fully explained.

For a detailed analysis of current US accreditation initiatives, challenges, experiments, and critical issues, see Kinser and Phillips (2018) and Eaton (2018), and for a knowledgeable overview of current topics in specialized accreditation, see Vibert (2018).

4.4 CEA: A US Specialized Accreditor Operating Internationally

The CEA was founded by TESOL International, at the request of four US professional associations: TESOL International, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, the American Association of Intensive English Programs (now English USA), and University and College Intensive English Programs (UCIEP). Following several years of formation, including engaging with the field to develop appropriate standards and drafting policies and procedures, CEA became legally separate and independent from TESOL and conducted the first accreditations in 1999. CEA achieved USDE recognition in 2002 as the only specialized accreditation agency in the United States for intensive English programs and institutions in higher education settings. The 44 CEA Standards address 11 subject areas: Mission, Curriculum, Faculty, Facilities/Equipment/Supplies, Administrative and Fiscal Capacity, Student Services, Recruiting, Length/Structure of the Program of Study, Student Achievement, Student Complaints, and Program Development, Planning, and Review. The accreditation process comprises an eligibility determination, period of self-study, self-study report, site visit, and accreditation decision. CEA maintains a pool of 200+ qualified and trained peer reviewers, an elected Commission of 13 members carries out accreditation decisions and agency governance, and CEA is operated from a central office by a full-time staff of eight, with professional staff members credentialed in the field.

Following the 2010 passage of the Accreditation Act described earlier, CEA grew rapidly to 340+ accredited sites. Over time, CEA reviewed and expanded its scope of accreditation in various ways, and in 2004 CEA added international accreditation to its scope. Since that time, international applications and accreditation actions have consistently comprised 8–9% of accredited sites, with 23 international sites accredited in 2018.

4.5 Expanding CEA's Scope Internationally

When demand for CEA accreditation in international settings arose in the early 2000s, the decision to accredit internationally was not a simple one. CEA conducted formal study regarding whether CEA could—and should—expand its scope and operate outside the United States. A Commission task force first investigated the feasibility of international accreditation, including through fact-finding visits to the Middle East where demand originated, and made initial recommendations. A program in Abu Dhabi agreed to serve as a pilot using existing CEA processes and standards, a process that was successfully carried out, followed by analysis of the results. A second task force, comprised of English language program professionals from Middle Eastern, Latin American, and Asian countries, reviewed the *CEA Standards* and made recommendations regarding possible amendments to

accommodate international settings. At various points, the Commission reviewed policies and procedures, including fees, and the Constituent Council, the body of accredited sites, held discussion sessions on matters related to CEA's appropriate international reach. In the end, CEA expanded its scope to offer international accreditation; CEA's mission statement was amended to include "worldwide"—a small but essential addition, as reflected in CEA's published mission statement:

> CEA's mission is to promote excellence in the field of English language teaching and administration through accreditation of English language programs and institutions worldwide, as well as to protect the interests of students. CEA achieves its mission by advancing widely-held standards to foster continuous program development through a rigorous process of regular self-assessment and peer evaluation.

A summary of the critical questions and decision points, from the conceptual to practical, follows.

4.6 Transferring the CEA Model to an International Context

As noted by Ewell (2008), Manning (2018), Green (2018), and others, when considering whether a quality assurance system such as accreditation can effectively "cross borders," it is imperative to understand and account for the inherent, explicit, and implicit conceptual and cultural underpinnings of the system. CEA is a quality assurance agency that displays all of the features that characterize US specialized accreditation. It was developed by a professional field and founded by TESOL International but became separate and independent from any professional membership association within 2 years of its founding. A program's or institution's mission is central to the accreditation process, and CEA does not dictate what the site's outcomes or student profile must be. It is committed to peer review, cultivates and trains peers to serve as site visitors and commissioners, and has processes that heavily constrain the conduct of peer reviewers and commissioners to guard against conflicts of interests. CEA has been structured to align with good practice for accreditation agencies and nonprofit corporations. It is shaped by necessary compliance with federal government regulatory requirements.

CEA ensures effective transfer to international settings by several means. First, in keeping with principles of intercultural communication, when engaging internationally CEA discloses and emphasizes the implications of the "culture of accreditation" generally, and then identifies this culture as the source for certain CEA practices rather than simply carrying out the practices and assuming they should be accepted as universally sound and understood. Thus, CEA presentations, published information, and workshops regularly explain these features and their implications so that those engaging with CEA understand why certain policies, procedures, and standards are in place and are administered as they are. For example, CEA's origins in TESOL International are a critical bona fide for CEA as a specialized accreditor, but the reasons for CEA, as an accreditor, being completely separate and independent from TESOL (and any other organization) are explained. (It is worth noting that this

characteristic of good accreditation practice must regularly be explained to US schools and audiences as well.) Explaining the fact that US accreditors are not animated by government planning goals for higher education but are governed by their boards of peer professionals is helpful in understanding how specialized accreditors stay well-engaged with subject matter expertise, undistracted by other goals, and it illuminates the value of the essential principle of peer review—rather than an inspection process by those outside the field—as the basis of review and a grant of accreditation.

Second, devotion to mission-based accreditation allows for a wide range of types of programs and institutions to be eligible for CEA accreditation, thus expanding access to quality assurance throughout the field; this also conveys that the value of self-study and accreditation is not restricted to only select models where the model itself does not have an evident linkage to quality. This is particularly important in conducting international accreditation, where English language programming comes in many forms—schools of foreign language, course sequences within preparatory and foundation year programs, specialized English programs for the disciplines, programs in standalone or contracted private schools, community service programs, and many others.

Overall, this extensive disclosure of CEA's underlying principles empowers potential international applicants and other decision-makers by providing ample information in advance of the process and encouraging open analysis, in consultation with CEA, regarding whether CEA is a good match for the mission, values, and goals of the applicant.

4.6.1 The Prospect of "Brand" Dilution Through International Expansion

In both domestic and international settings, accreditors must consider what the baseline for a grant of accreditation will be so that the accreditation mark has meaning. When CEA began investigating international accreditation, a limited number of US accreditors were operating abroad, and CEA examined the models. ABET, the accreditor for engineering and related programs, was the most active internationally; at the time, in 2004, ABET offered a form of review called "substantial equivalency." This form of quality assurance, since ended by ABET, allowed for international sites to meet modified standards, accommodated programs still in development, and encouraged continued improvement in those programs (ABET, 2019). Other accreditors had or have similar accommodative categories of their accreditation marks. However, despite their value, "equivalency" marks are, or can be viewed as less than full accreditation. After study, CEA decided to not develop an international version of accreditation; international sites are accredited based on the same criteria as US sites, and CEA accreditation indicates the same value whether in the United States or in international locations.

A second issue related to the quality of CEA's "brand" was CEA's ability to monitor compliance in international settings. Again, after study, CEA concluded that the challenges related to ensuring ongoing compliance in international settings were little different than those in the United States. The detailed self-study and site-review process provides for an evidence-based accreditation decision, and regular mandatory reporting results in maintenance of compliant practices. Where violations of CEA's standards or processes may allegedly exist, CEA's policies related to complaints and disciplinary actions provide avenues for investigating noncompliance.

In moving forward with international accreditation, CEA determined that the value of CEA's accreditation would be enhanced if all policies were consistently followed, the *CEA Standards* were consistently applied, and grants of accreditation were based on verifiable site compliance.

4.6.2 Functional Changes Required for Internationalization

All accreditors must have a defined scope in order to operate effectively. That is, there must be basic definitions of what is required for a program or institution to be eligible for the accreditor's process. Some accreditation agencies use an eligibility process that includes some quality assurance measures, while others simply set parameters and seek to establish what will be reviewed if a program or institution is accepted to start the process. CEA eligibility is this second form. The four basic eligibility requirements that an applicant must meet to be accepted to start the process are (1) programs in universities and colleges and independent language schools must offer an intensive English program (IEP) of at least 18 h/week of instruction, (2) the educational program must have sequenced levels of instruction for non-native English speakers, (3) the educational program must be on offer for at least 8 months of the year, and (4) the program or institution must have been in operation for at least 1 year. Two of these eligibility requirements are linked to CEA's US context. Due to certain USDE definitions, US sites must clearly be a *program* (i.e., an educational program within an accredited institution) or an *institution* (i.e., an entity that is not within another accredited institution). Accreditation, if granted, is therefore either *programmatic* or *institutional*. In addition, the definition of an *intensive* English program comprising at least 18 h/week of instruction is drawn from a US regulation related to visa requirements for international students coming to the US to study English. In deciding to accept international applicants, these two eligibility requirements were modified, as they do not relate to quality or to the ability of a site to meet *CEA Standards*. International sites are eligible for *general* accreditation rather than being subject to *programmatic* or *institutional* distinctions; it is important to note that this *general* category is about the eligibility of the program structure and is not a diminishment of standards. Also, international sites are not required to offer at least 18 instructional hours per week in order to be eligible for CEA accreditation. Regarding other policies and procedures (with two exceptions described below related to fees and to certain responses to *CEA Standards*), CEA made no other changes related to international sites.

4.6.3 Amending Standards for Internationalization

The CEA Standards are the foundation of the accreditation process. An Accreditation Advisory Committee funded by TESOL in the 1990s initially drafted them with input from a broad range of professionals from the field. Because standards cannot be static, they have been regularly reviewed and revised as needed based on their use in practice.

A critical area of analysis for any accreditor or QA organization making the decision to operate internationally is to determine whether the accreditor's standards must be adapted to the international or cultural setting. CEA examined this issue quite closely, convening a special task force to focus on *the CEA Standards* particularly. Good reasons exist for an accreditor to provide modified standards in some cases; for example, accreditors of counseling degree programs may have standards that adapt to considerably different cultural norms related to personal counseling, or certain health profession accreditors may need to have standards that relate to a given country's national licensing requirements or the required outcomes of a government-sponsored degree program, which do not apply in the United States or other country-of-origin setting. However, English language teaching and learning as a discipline or profession does not have these constraints; since CEA accreditation is mission-driven, a site can determine what student and program outcomes are necessary, so it was not necessary at the level of the *Standards* themselves to provide accommodations for international sites that may be meeting the needs of local populations or the dictates of their governments or their institutions. As noted above, CEA did not embrace any form of equivalent accreditation, and therefore, after study, CEA did not amend any standard when moving in to the international arena except to edit a limited number of phrasings that could be interpreted as related only to the US setting.

However, in both US and international settings, occasionally a standard will not apply to a given program or institution. For example, one of the CEA Faculty standards requires close supervision of teachers-in-training if the site serves as a training program for TESL/TEFL instructors; when a program or institution does not conduct such training, the standard is not applicable. One of the Student Services standards requires certain qualifications for those who provide student counseling regarding US immigration regulations, nonapplicable to an international site.

To date, two primary issues related to compliance with *CEA Standards* in international settings have to do with faculty qualifications (Faculty Standard 1) and student admissions requirements (Student Services Standard 1). Regarding Faculty 1, the baseline degree requirements in the *CEA Standards* in some cases do not align with a country's employment laws or other country-specific characteristics. Similarly, the Student Services 1 requirement that a program or institution ensures that students meet published admissibility requirements that also align with the school's mission may be difficult—or impossible—to meet if all applicants must be accepted, as pertains to some programs in some countries. In these cases, the CEA standard and process are not altered; the program or institution provides a response to the standard and the peer reviewers and commissioners then determine the level of compliance and any rationale for action or reporting by the site.

In sum, CEA did not develop separate international standards in part or in whole, nor amend policies or procedures for international sites. Rather, the existing process of self-study, by which sites provide evidence and rationales for compliance or the rare nonapplicability, followed by peer review and onsite verifications, and then Commission review, works well to fit international situations into the CEA accreditation process.

4.6.4 Peer Review in an International Model

Volunteer peer engagement is a critical element of specialized accreditation, and for CEA, site reviewers and commissioners are these volunteer peers. Site visit peer reviewers evaluate the program against the *CEA Standards* and provide the Commission with a report with findings. Commissioners are responsible for reviewing all site information and making accreditation decisions. Reviewers and commissioners are carefully selected and trained to apply the *CEA Standards* consistently and to follow CEA procedures and protocols at all times.

As previously described, the concept of peer review is premised on multiple factors, the most basic of which is that accreditation findings are not determined by an external prescriptive body but through the expertise of peers in the professional field. Thus, the peer-review model may not be a fit with quality assurance systems that have prescriptive needs, however sound, imposed by governments or national quality assurance bodies comprised of higher education and QA professionals but not English language teaching and learning subject matter experts. In addition, peer review works only if tightly controlled through mandatory training and management by the accreditor; otherwise, it can be subject to corrupting influences or control by cliques or agenda groups. When CEA opted to leave the peer review model fully in place for international accreditation, a necessary part of accrediting in a given country was to explain and advocate for the peer review system, document how peers are trained and constrained, and build confidence that accreditation findings and decisions were based on the *CEA Standards* and not subject to personal opinion or bias.

4.6.5 Organizational Capacity and Price Structuring for Internationalization

When any organization contemplates growth or new initiatives, the organization's capacity to effectively scale up or expand must be realistically evaluated. In deciding to expand into international accreditation, CEA conducted detailed analysis of the tangible and intangible costs of doing so. Regarding applications, self-studies, site visits, and accreditation decisions, preliminary study indicated that although CEA accreditation was certainly in demand by some schools in international settings, large numbers were not anticipated. The number of regular accreditation

activities related to international sites has been 8–9% of CEA's total, and this number has been relatively easy to integrate into CEA's work. When CEA grew rapidly after the 2010 US Accreditation Act led to a tripling of applicants, international accreditation actions, and some US domestic ones, were delayed by a few months in order for CEA to accomplish the many site visits. However, these delays were one-time events.

The two resources that were most affected were the number of peer reviewers trained and available to conduct international site visits, which include additional days due to overseas travel, and fees related to international visits. Regarding peer reviewers, the overall growth of the pool of qualified and trained reviewers has resulted in sufficient numbers of reviewers to meet all of CEA's site visit needs; the reviewer pool includes individuals from international locations, and while international reviewers are not assigned exclusively to international sites, the availability of internationally located reviewers has been of benefit in meeting scheduling needs in some cases.

Regarding fees, all published fees, barring one, apply equally to both US and international sites, as there are no variations in the CEA-provided services and actions between the two categories of sites at the stages of application, workshop attendance, self-study planning, or sustaining fees after accreditation, if granted. The one exception is the fee for the site visit. In the United States, one flat fee applies to all sites, regardless of location, and over the whole of a year's site visits, the fees in aggregate sufficiently cover the expenses of the visits. However, international visits incur widely varying expenses, and in some cases, expenses are well above the average for US travel. After a fee analysis documented that the usual flat fee charged for US site visits would not cover the expenses of international visits, a different fee structure was established for international visits that ensured that the visits were not subsidized by the US-based site visit fee. The resulting fee structure includes a base fee plus the direct expenses for the visit.

Interestingly, the very practical matter of fees also required extended discussion of how CEA should address programs and institutions in countries with economic challenges. At issue was whether CEA fees should be reduced for applicants in such countries. Given that many small programs and institutions in the United States could arguably be considered financially challenged, particularly during periods of low enrollments outside of their control, and given that the initial task force ruled that all expenses for international accreditation activities must be fully recoverable, the Commission concluded that all published fees would be equally applied in all settings.

4.6.6 CEA's Final Framing of Internationalization

In order to determine CEA's international position, CEA analyzed questions related to the transferability of the US model of accreditation to international settings, the applicability of policies, procedures, and standards, and practical matters including

fees. The final frame can be summarized this way: CEA did not amend its approach to accreditation, or any policies, procedures, or standards in order to accommodate international applicants. Any international English language program that meets CEA's eligibility requirements, can adhere to CEA's existing policies and procedures, and can demonstrate compliance with the *CEA Standards* is welcomed to the process.

Within this frame, through 2018, CEA has accredited 23 international English language programs and institutions, including English programs as part of preparatory year or foundation programs, English course series within university English departments, English programs delivered by bi-national centers, community college English programs, standalone private schools, and other models. Demand continues, with an additional 8–10 international applicants in process at any given time.

Studies of the process and value of CEA accreditation in international settings are becoming available as research is conducted and papers published. See, for example, Collins's (2015) analysis of the impact of CEA accreditation on organizational culture in a school of foreign languages and Almuhammadi's (2017) case study of an accredited site's analysis of mission as part of CEA accreditation. For a general analysis of how US standards transfer to international settings, see Taylor (2018). Further data on the value of CEA accreditation is forthcoming in 2019, when CEA publishes an extensive study of the benefits of accreditation as reported in 300-plus accreditation actions by programs and institutions. In preview, among the benefits reported by at least half of the international sites in the data set are the following:

- The principle and practice of reflective self-study is a primary benefit, including identifying strengths—not just weaknesses.
- The self-study process provides a critical opportunity for comprehensive review within a framework established by a professional accreditation agency.
- The standards were established in consultation with subject matter experts in the English language teaching and learning field.
- The self-study and accreditation process was excellent professional development for all involved—administrators, staff, and faculty. It required all to review current research and good practice in the field. It elevated professional values, increased openness and transparency, and heightened the sense of collegiality and responsibility.
- Achieving accreditation built credibility with all stakeholders—students, sponsors, host institutions, governments, faculty, and others. Students particularly benefit from better programs.
- The process emphasized the value of methodical planning, updating of policies, procedures, manuals, and a regular and systematic approach program practices.
- Accreditation increased the value of evidence, particularly data to document student success and achievement.

4.7 Conclusion

When a quality assurance system is to be adopted or adapted from another setting, essential groundwork is to identify the inherent principles and underlying structure of the QA system and ensure that they are appropriate for the setting into which they are introduced. Accreditation as originated in the United States is premised on a particular history and displays a particular theoretical and legal framework; when a US accreditor undertakes international accreditation, this history and framework informs the success of the international activity. CEA's experience in analyzing the process of "going international" resulted in important decisions regarding what CEA could and should do to adapt to international settings. In the end, CEA committed to stability in its established policies, procedures, and standards while making modest changes in eligibility requirements to allow for international applications. Since 2004, CEA has been accrediting international programs and institutions that deliver English language teaching and learning programs, with documented positive results.

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Chapter 5
Accreditation: A Commodity or a Quest for Quality?

Ludka Kotarska

Abstract This chapter presents the current trends in accreditation schemes based on the analysis of the UK-based schemes such as Accreditation UK, British Accreditation Council's (BAC)/International English Language Provider Accreditation Scheme (IELP) and BALEAP Accreditation Scheme (BAS), the Finnish audit model of quality systems in higher education institutions, Languages Canada, as well as international schemes designed specifically for language training providers: The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), Eaquals and NEAS. The chapter examines the scope of the schemes: quality standards and criteria, the role of self-assessment and accreditation processes. It considers whether the schemes go beyond awarding quality labels and if they stimulate improvement incentives at the institutional level and facilitate programmes of continuous development.

5.1 Introduction

It is a cliché to say that in the era of globalisation and increasing competition, the development and growth of countries depends—among other factors—on the standards and performance of their education and training systems. Globalisation has generated a trend to adopt quality-focused strategies for the development of educational sectors both state and private and at all levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. Quality has become a household name defined as a set of attributes, fitness for purpose or value for money and concepts such as quality assurance, quality audits, quality control or quality culture (Harvey, 2004–18) are included in any discourse on standards in education. At the same time, globalisation has created demands for defining international standards which centre around concepts such as transparency, communication of the learning outcomes, self-evaluation, continuous improvement and development or accountability. The growth and expansion of the language

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_5

education sector on the global scale has confirmed the need for visible quality labels which, over the last three decades, has led to the establishment of a number of accreditation schemes. They represent an increasing move towards more highly organised attempts to manage the delivery and assessment of quality in education which has been reinforced by the growing competition among educational institutions for students, money and reputation locally, nationally and globally (Blanc-Ramirez & Berger, 2014).

Accreditation is commonly understood to be a formal statement confirming that an institution 'has met standards set by external regulators' (Oxford English Dictionary Online) following a cyclical evaluation. Accreditation is the way through which an institution can communicate its mission and vision and its commitment to quality. It helps institutions market their programmes and services and gives them visible labelling, recognised locally in case of the national schemes and globally for the international ones. Accreditation is not an event, it is a process whose complexity should not be underestimated. It is a challenge for accreditation agencies as well as institutions. Designing an accreditation scheme requires careful consideration of a number of issues such as:

- The scope of accreditation: private or public institutions, or both.
- The framework: definitions, criteria and standards.
- Methodological approaches and practical implications.
- Inclusion of self-assessment, peer evaluation, public report.
- Respect for institutional autonomy.

There are further considerations which should not be ignored:

- How can a scheme serve a diverse constituency?
- How to establish an appropriate balance between external accountability and institutional autonomy?
- Will the tools recognise/reward excellence or will they only define and assess minimum standards?

In the process of designing an accreditation scheme, an agency or any other organisation should take into consideration the perspectives and expectations of all stakeholders, as it can be argued that within institutions which will apply for accreditation there will be a wide range of perspectives defined by the roles and positions of those involved in decision making. An imperative on the part of the owners and managers could differ considerably from the perspective of the academic staff. For the latter, the incentive will be to enhance standards, encourage self-evaluation and development and foster the culture of collegiality and support, whereas management may be more interested in accountability and is more likely to consider other tangible benefits of accreditation such as measurable reputation, commercial success or return on investment. For either group of the stakeholders, the visibility and recognition of the quality label will be essential. The accreditation scheme should accommodate different objectives and interests, and the process should bring positive outputs. It should be stressed that one of the most important factors of the accreditation process is the involvement of all staff, its understanding of the purpose of accreditation so that it is not perceived as simply an end in itself or resented for creating extra workload.

5.2 Overview of Selected Quality Assurance Schemes for Language Education: Typology and Description

The last three decades have witnessed the development of a number of accreditation schemes as nearly every nation has developed its own accreditation system for quality assurance in foreign language education. In earlier days, these schemes operated solely at the national level and focused on private language schools and English as a foreign language. However, an increasing number of institutions started seeking international accreditation. This trend was reinforced by the impact of globalisation and the growing internationalisation of standards in education, and for higher education it was initiated by the signing of the Bologna Process accord in 1999. This created the need for schemes which could be applied across a wide range of providers: stand-alone language schools and training centres as well as large and complex organisations such as universities. The demand generated the supply and a number of schemes have been established which—similarly to educational institutions—compete on the international arena. The geographical and sectorial expansion of accreditation schemes has become a fact of life.

In this section of the chapter, the following accreditation schemes will be examined:

- The UK-based schemes: Accreditation UK, BAC/IELP and BALEAP.
- The US-based scheme: CEA.
- Languages Canada.
- The Australian scheme: NEAS.
- An international scheme: Eaquals.
- The Finnish scheme for HEI: FINEEC.

These schemes have been selected because they are well established both in the national and international arenas and have been designed with various types of educational organisations in mind: public and private, stand-alone independent language centres and schools as well as centres belonging to international chains, institutions under contract with colleges and universities and university-based programmes.

5.3 Criteria and Standards

The schemes mentioned above operate on the basis of clearly articulated and transparent sets of criteria and standards. The range and precise format of which differs depending on the scope of accreditation offered and its geographical and sectorial coverage.

Accreditation UK operates as a partnership between the British Council and English UK and the scheme is applied in the UK and for English only. It was established in its present format in 1996 and is open to providers of English language teaching services: language schools, home tuition providers, further education and

higher education institutions, international study centres and independent schools (Accreditation UK Handbook, 2016–2017). Its main purpose is to develop, establish and maintain quality standards for English language provision delivered in the UK for international students and accredits organisations which meet the scheme's standards. The most significant benefit it offers to accredited providers is eligibility to enrol students on a short-term student visa.

The scheme covers four main standards divided into categories and each of them includes a set of criteria.

Management:

- Legal and statutory regulations.
- Staff management.
- Student administration.
- Quality assurance.
- Publicity—information available before enrolment.

Resources and Environment:

- Premises and facilities.
- Learning resources.

Teaching and Learning:

- Academic staff profile.
- Academic management.
- Course design and implementation.
- Learner management.
- Classroom observation.

Welfare and Student Services:

- Care of students.
- Accommodation.
- Leisure opportunities.
- Care of under 18 students (if applicable).

Additional criteria include:

- Criteria for the inspection of home tuition (Home Tuition Register, Terms and Conditions, Placement, Environment).
- Criteria for the inspection of international study centres (Management and Communication, Teaching, Teacher Support, Teacher Qualifications, Curriculum, Placement, Publicity).
- Criteria for the inspection of in-company provision (Managing Client Expectations, Premises, Timetabling and Course Design, Welfare and Student Services).

International English Language Provider Accreditation Scheme (IELP) launched in 2018 by the British Accreditation Council (BAC), is a voluntary quality assurance scheme for English language providers both private and public operating outside the

UK. The scheme covers four main areas and defines minimum standards for every inspection area (IELP Scheme Document, 2018):

- Management, staffing, administration and quality assurance.
- Teaching, learning and assessment including academic management, course planning and resources.
- Learner welfare including accommodation services and social and leisure programmes.
- Premises and facilities including online, distance and blended learning provision.

The BALEAP Accreditation Scheme (BAS) is a peer-review quality assurance and enhancement scheme designed to establish and sustain the standards required for specialised courses in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in further and higher education, predominantly in the UK (BALEAP Accreditation Handbook, 2016). The current criteria for assessment of EAP courses are derived from a Code of Practice established in 1989 and reviewed in 2011, 2014 and 2016. There are five main areas of assessment:

- Institutional Context: communications, staff recruitment, its profile and development, terms and conditions and working environment, legal requirements concerning students visas, health and safely, learning and welfare resources.
- Course Management: academic staff qualifications and responsibilities, monitoring of effectiveness of teaching and course evaluation.
- Course Design: principles of course design, its aims and learning outcomes, course components, learning and teaching resources.
- Teaching and Learning: teachers' skills and competencies, lesson preparation and delivery.
- Assessment, Evaluation and Progression: the effectiveness and validity of assessment criteria and processes, summative assessment, progression routes, exit assessment, reports and certificates.

The Australia-based scheme NEAS provides quality assurance services to ELT and vocational providers (universities, colleges and high schools) in Australia and internationally, mainly in South East Asia and the Middle East. The NEAS Quality Assurance Framework comprises seven Quality Areas (NEAS Quality Assurance Framework Version 3.0, 2018). Within each Quality Area, there are Quality Principles, which describe salient aspects of quality, and have been mapped against the related requirements of the National (Australian) Code Practice and the standards for English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS). Each Quality Principle is supported by Quality Drivers, which specify the key elements of the Quality Principles. The NEAS Quality Framework covers the following Quality Areas:

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment: course design, teachers' qualifications, student assessment, course delivery, learning strategy, student support and feedback.

- The Student Experience: application and enrolment processes, provision for student well-being and welfare, information and support offered to students and evaluation, review and complaint procedures.
- Resources and Facilities: professional workplace, teaching and study spaces, students facilities and services, resources for courses available students and teachers.
- Administration, Management and Staffing: organisational structure, staff recruitment policy, staff qualifications, terms and conditions, staff performance and development, communication and dissemination of information.
- Promotion and Student Recruitment: promotional material and information, promotion policies, commitment to quality assurance and display of the NEAS logo.
- Welfare of Students Aged Under 18 Years: arrangements to facilitate student's recruitment, transit and reception, accommodation services, welfare, safety and security of the Centre's environment, training of staff responsible for assuring student well-being.
- Strategy, Risk and Governance: systems of strategic and business planning, organisational structure and reporting, financial systems, risk assessment and management, ethics and culture, health and safety.

The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) is a specialised accrediting agency that focuses on post-secondary intensive English language programmes and institutions, and it conducts accreditation activities in the USA and internationally. The CEA Scheme comprises 44 individual standards in 11 areas (CEA Standards for English Language Programs and Institutions, 2017). The standards adhere to the requirements for specific standard areas as identified by the US Department of Education regulations for recognised accrediting agencies. The 11 areas include the following standards:

- Mission.
- Curriculum: course goals and objectives, student learning outcomes, methodologies and materials.
- Faculty: qualifications and competencies of faculty members, job descriptions and terms and conditions, continuous professional development and performance reviews.
- Facilities, Equipment and Supplies.
- Administrative and Fiscal Capacity: administrative structure, governance system, administrative staff (job descriptions, competencies, continuous professional development, performance reviews), administrative policies and procedures, information channels, compliance with law, students' and personnel's contractual records and financial policies.
- Student Services: admission and enrolment policies, academic and personal counselling, pre-arrival information, induction programme, health insurance, social and recreational programme, housing and access to information.
- Recruiting.
- Length and Structure of Program Study.
- Student Achievement: placement system, assessment of progress, achievement of learning outcomes, written records and clear assessment criteria and procedures.

- Student Complaints.
- Program Development, Planning, and Review Standard.

Languages Canada is Canada's primary language organization representing its two official languages: English and French which is recognized by the Canadian government and internationally. The mission of Languages Canada is to ensure the best interest of students studying or planning to study English and/or French in Canada (Languages Canada Quality Assurance Scheme Accreditation Handbook Orion Assessment Services, 2017). Adherence to the Standards and Quality Assurance Scheme is a requirement of membership of Languages Canada. There are six areas examined and within each area there are main standards and additional specifications:

- Student Admissions: registration procedures, programme information, statements of what fees include, policy for handling student records, immigration and insurance requirements.
- Student Services: general and academic orientation, support services such as financial and legal advice, tutoring, medical services, accommodation, extracurricular activities and student welfare.
- Teaching Staff: teacher qualifications, linguistic competence, cross cultural awareness, performance appraisals, class observation and professional development.
- Curriculum: course design, course content and objectives, system of levels, methodology, testing and placement, academic resources and excursions.
- Marketing and Recruiting: student recruitment, procedures for dealing with agents and publicity materials.
- Administration: leadership, organisational structure, job descriptions and professional profile of academic leaders, administration systems and processes, policies, orientation, induction and support for staff, terms of employment, facilities and operational reviews.

Eaquals is an international member organisation whose mission is to help develop excellent standards in language teaching and learning and support quality in the teaching of any language, in any country and in any education sector. The Eaquals values such as plurilingualism, intercultural understanding, international cooperation and lifelong learning are embedded in the Eaquals Charters: The General Charter, the Charter for Course Participants, the Staff Charter and the Information Charter. The Quality Standards of the Eaquals Accreditation Scheme are derived from the Charters and are a practical expression of their philosophy. The Standards are arranged in twelve Categories which correspond to different aspects of the activity of a Language Education Centre. Within each category, there is a number of specific standards and a set of indicators of compliance. The twelve categories (The Eaquals Inspection Scheme Manual Version 7.1, 2016) include:

- Management and Administration: institutional ethos and mission, leadership and organisational structure, compliance with legislation.
- Teaching and Learning: pedagogical approach, the quality of course delivery, lesson planning and learning outcomes, use of technology and resources.

- Course Design and Supporting Systems: learning programmes (course objectives and content), system of levels, academic management and coordination structure.
- Assessment and Certification: placement procedures, formative and summative assessment, evaluation of progress and exit assessment, information on public examinations, reports and certificates.
- Academic Resources: coursebooks, core course resources, online learning platforms, reference materials, equipment and electronic connectivity.
- Learning Environment: teaching and studying environment, non-pedagogical facilities, health and safety of students and staff.
- Client Services: welfare of learners, pastoral care of students under the age of 18, accommodation services, leisure programmes, advice and support available to learners.
- Quality Assurance: monitoring and evaluation of the learning experience, class observations, student feedback.
- Staff Profile and Development: competencies, experience and qualifications of managers, teachers and administrative staff, continuous professional development for staff, performance reviews.
- Staff Employment Terms: employment contracts, terms and conditions offered to staff.
- Internal Communications: responsibilities and lines of accountability, grievance and disciplinary procedures for staff, channels of communication and information about the institution and Eaquals.
- External Communications: promotional materials, website, social media, contractual information provided to learners and sponsors, display of the Eaquals Charters and use of the logo.

Out of the twelve categories, four cover academic systems: Course Design and Supporting Systems, Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Certification and Academic Resources, and two are derived from the Staff Charter: Staff Profile and Development, and Staff Terms and Conditions. There is a separate category which covers the standards related to internal quality assurance.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is in charge of audits of quality systems of higher education institutions (HEI), not only of language programmes. The objective of the audit is to support Finnish HEIs in developing quality systems that correspond to the European principles of quality assurance, and to demonstrate that functional and consistent quality assurance procedures are in place both in institutions and at the national level (FINEEC, 2015). The Finnish audit model is based on institutional reviews, and it covers the functions of an HEI from a broad perspective. The auditing method respects the autonomy of HEIs which are responsible for developing their own quality systems and audits assess the comprehensiveness, functionality and effectiveness of those systems. The approach and methodology differ from the schemes examined so far as its target areas focus on the quality system as a whole, its link with strategic management, on quality policies and quality management. Assessment is based on a set of criteria which refer to

the scale of four development stages of quality management: absent, emerging, developing and advanced.

5.4 Comparing Quality Standards

A comparison of the schemes with respect to their principles, quality standards and assessment criteria confirms a number of common features and highlights the main difference. Although the number of the main standards or assessment areas ranges from five (Accreditation UK and BALEAP) to 12 (Eaquals), all the schemes cover five generic standards:

- Management, Administration, Governance and Staff.
- Programme Design and Delivery.
- Assessment and Certification.
- Resources and Learning Environment.
- Student Welfare and Services.

Quality assurance is an integral element of the core standards as shown in Fig. 5.1. It is only in the Eaquals scheme where it forms a separate category.

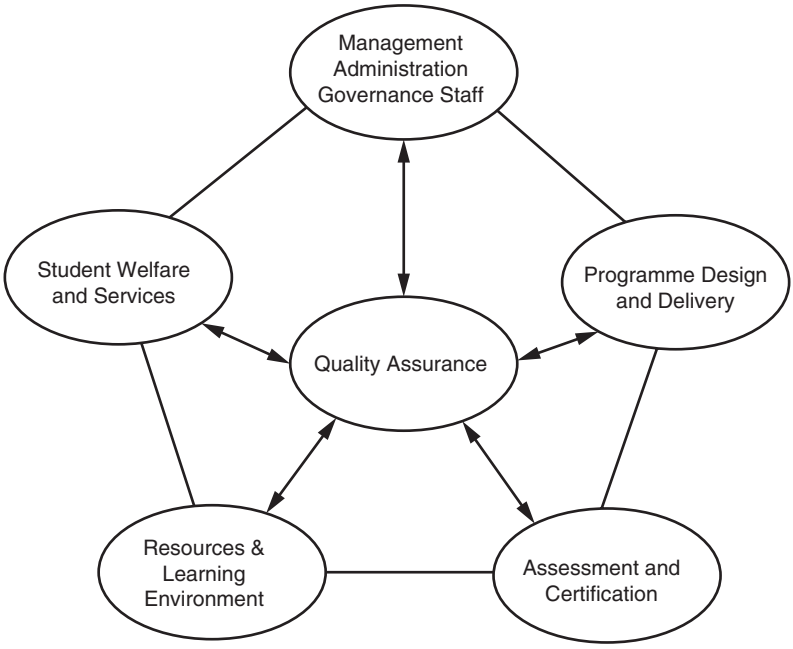

Fig. 5.1 Generic quality standards

The main difference between the schemes is in the way the standards are structured and articulated. Their focus and the level of detail depend on whether the scheme operates at the national level only, and whether it limits itself to assessing English language training. The spectrum and profile of institutions eligible for accreditation is another factor which determines the structure and coverage of the main quality standards.

Accreditation UK is more specific in the way the standards are formulated, since the scheme is applied only to ELT provision in the UK which explains reference to UK legislation such as the Advertising Standards Authority and copyright and licensing agencies operating there, visa and immigration regulations and Companies Act, and for academic staff profile the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications. The scheme includes detailed criteria related to student welfare and services which take into account local legislation, in particular in relation to the care of students under the age of 18.

The BALEAP Scheme has been designed to assess EAP programmes not institutions, and it is targeted at the UK. However, its assessment criteria can be applied in the international context as well. The Standards of the BAC/IELP Scheme are detailed but not prescriptive to allow the Scheme to assess English language providers worldwide. As it applies to ELT only, it makes specific reference to English teacher qualifications and English language examinations.

The Eaquals scheme unlike most schemes which have been set up to operate in a single country and/or a single language, aimed from the very beginning to apply quality standards for a wide range of languages and internationally—and so to enable stakeholders to be sure that quality standards are comparable in different countries and for the teaching of different languages. This is reflected in the way the scheme has been designed. Its core Quality Standards are supported by indicators of compliance which are not intended as a checklist but as a guide to ensuring the Language Education Centre meets the Standards. In this respect, it adopts a similar approach to that of the Australian Scheme NEAS. NEAS Quality Principles are supported by more specific Quality Drivers. However, they may not be relevant to certain centres and therefore not applied in every case. This gives the scheme a clearly defined assessment framework and flexibility to accredit centres both in Australia and overseas.

The Standards of the US-based CEA scheme are elaborated in a discursive manner. Although the scheme presents a US-centred view, it has been successfully applied to accredit programmes and institutions abroad. Languages Canada, like CEA and Accreditation UK, covers extensively Student Admissions and Support Services and refers to specific requirements regarding teacher qualifications as the scheme accredits English and French programmes in Canada only. Compared to the other schemes, the Finnish one covers and reviews all functions of an HEI from a broad perspective, and it has adopted a holistic approach to assess quality in HEI.

Undoubtedly, all the schemes examined were set up with a broad view of education in mind and an objective to assess ‘the whole institution’. Particular attention is paid to the assessment of academic systems which—although structured differently

in every scheme—cover academic staff qualifications and profile, course/curriculum design, course delivery (teaching and learning) including class observation, academic resources, assessment (placement testing, assessment of progress, summative and formative assessment, final examinations) and academic management supporting systems.

5.5 Principles and Processes

The accreditation schemes examined follow an established set of processes which comprise five main stages:

1. Application for accreditation.
2. Pre-site visit.
3. The site/inspection visit.
4. Post-site visit.
5. Maintenance of accreditation.

5.5.1 Application for Accreditation

All of these schemes define eligibility criteria and the applicant institutions' eligibility for accreditation is scrutinised at various levels. They are required to submit a set of advance documents such as an application form, a declaration of statutory compliance, evidence of financial stability and academic documentation.

5.5.2 Pre-Visit: Self-Reviews/Self-Assessment

The pre-visit stage includes in most cases some form of self-review. Institutional self-reviews are perceived as a valuable tool which encourages reflection, engages and empowers staff and provides a safe framework for giving and receiving feedback and acting on it effectively.

Eaquals requires its prospective members to conduct an institutional self-assessment prior to submitting the application. The self-assessment scheme includes a questionnaire and a set of tasks, and it mirrors the structure of the Accreditation Scheme. It helps identify developments needed to meet the Eaquals Standards, and its results inform an action plan. (Eaquals Self-Assessment Handbook, 2017) Additionally, Eaquals offers an option of an advisory visit which combines a pre-inspection with consultancy. It enables applicant institutions have greater control over the accreditation process, and improvements can be introduced over a period of time in a staged and more sustainable way.

Self-assessment is also a strong element of the Finnish system, deeply rooted in its evaluation tradition. Unlike the Eaquals self-assessment scheme, the Finnish one leaves it to the discretion of the HEI to choose how to carry out its self-evaluation. Its objective is to identify areas in need of development, provide a description of practical measures related to quality work and write a report which is submitted prior to the audit visit, and follows an established structure.

Accreditation UK neither requires nor offers a self-review, instead applicants can request pre-inspection scrutiny and participate at briefing events held by the British Council. CEA on the other hand invites institutions which meet eligibility requirements to attend a 2-day workshop. Participants learn more about the standards, and receive guidance on how to complete the self-study report. One month after the workshop, they submit a plan for the self-study. The CEA self-study is a reflective activity, whereby an institution evaluates how well it meets the CEA standards and recommends areas of improvement, if any.

Languages Canada require an off-site review to be conducted by the institution to identify any major gaps prior to the on-site audit. A Preliminary Review Report details strengths, areas for improvement and areas of concern to be addressed at the site visit. NEAS takes another approach: anonymous on-line surveys are completed by students and managers, and by teaching, administration and marketing staff in the weeks immediately prior to the site visit and their results define the areas of focus for the site visit (A Plain Guide to NEAS Quality Endorsement). Two of the examined schemes: BAC/IELP and BALEAP do not include a pre-visit self-review in the accreditation process.

5.5.3 Site Visits

Site visits called inspections by some schemes are commonly used in quality assurance procedures. In some schemes (FINEEC, CEA and Languages Canada) site visits and self-review reports are closely connected and the latter one defines the scope of the visit. The length of a site visit varies from scheme to scheme, and it lasts from 2 to 5 days, its length being determined by the scope of the scheme and the size of the institution.

The visits are conducted by a team of on average two or three auditors, called also inspectors, reviewers or assessors and all the schemes ensure the arms' length relationship between the auditors and the institution in order to guarantee impartiality. The auditors are carefully selected senior and knowledgeable professionals from the field of education who undergo regular training and standardisation so that the audits are carried out in a competent manner, in line with procedures, and that standards are applied consistently. During the visits the auditors verify the contents of self-review reports when applicable, evaluate whether the institution meets the standards of the scheme by inspecting documentation, premises and resources, interviewing staff and students and observing classes.

5.5.4 Post-Visit Validation Process

The visit is followed by a report delivered by the auditors within an agreed time frame. These are standardised documents which include a recommended verdict statement, an account of the visit, findings related to each standard, whether it is met or not or partially met, and a summary of strengths and weaknesses. Some reports, e.g. Eaquals, Languages Canada, NEAS, also contain recommendations for improvement and further development. Every scheme has developed a transparent and impartial procedure to moderate reports and validate verdicts proposed by auditors.

The 13-member CEA Commission uses the self-study report, the review team report, the response from the institution and a review of finances to make its accreditation decision. The Commission judges the institution based on its compliance with the CEA Standards.

At Languages Canada the accreditation process is governed by an independent Accreditation Advisory Board. The results from the Preliminary Review and On-Site Audit are assessed by a Senior Evaluator to ensure a proper recommendation has been made. At this point, approval is given to accredit or not, suspend or terminate the programme.

In Finland, the Higher Education Evaluation Committee decides on the audit results based on the audit report. The Committee is responsible for ensuring that decisions are impartial. In addition, the chair or vice-chair of the audit team gives a presentation of the audit's key results at the decision-making meeting and answers the Committee's questions on the issues presented in the report.

Following the site visit, the NEAS Quality Assessor submits a recommendation alongside the survey and focus group results. The final decision about Quality Endorsement resides with NEAS senior management and its Board (NEAS A Plain Guide to Quality Endorsement Version 4, 2018).

The Accreditation UK inspection reports are moderated by the Accreditation Scheme Advisory Committee who recommend the verdict to the Executive Board.

At Eaquals, an independent Accreditation Panel oversees the accreditation procedures and decision-making about the accreditation of new members and re-accreditation of Eaquals member institutions, assisting with the impartial assessment of inspection reports. Every report is read by members of the Accreditation Panel, who ensure that standards are applied consistently and reports are evidence-based and sufficiently detailed.

The BALEAP Accreditation Scheme Committee ratifies the decision on whether or not the course will receive accreditation. The report is submitted by the assessors to the Committee specifying the extent to which the criteria are met. In the case of BAC/IELP Scheme, a report of the inspection is considered by the Accreditation Committee which decides to award, defer or refuse accreditation based on the evidence of whether all minimum standards are met.

All the schemes demonstrate a high degree of similarity of approach—they all require the minimum standards to be met. The Eaquals grading scheme also recog-

nises excellence referring to a set of indicators of excellence which identity categories or areas where an institution exceeds the already high quality standards.

The range of verdicts varies depending on the scheme and the status of the institution. For institutions applying for continuing accreditation the verdicts state continued or re-confirmed accreditation, referral or accreditation under review, alternatively withdrawing or discontinuing accreditation, whereas for new applicants granting, pending or withholding accreditation.

5.5.5 The Accreditation Cycle and Maintenance of Accreditation

The length of accreditation varies from 2 years (NEAS) to three (BAC/IELP) and four (Accreditation UK, BALEAP, Eaquals, Languages Canada and six (FINEEC). CEA initial accreditation may be granted for 1 year or 5 years.

Granting accreditation or re-confirming it is not a final stage of the process. The adherence to standards and maintaining quality is monitored by accreditation agencies as regular reviews to confirm ongoing quality are critical in an industry with a high turnover of stakeholders. They protect the wellbeing of students and safeguard the reputation of the sector.

At Languages Canada in order to ensure that all accredited programmes continue to maintain the standards, every accredited programme is subject to a Maintenance Review 2 years after the on-site visit. This consists of an update report on selected areas of the standards. Site visits are conducted once every 4 years. NEAS grants Quality Endorsement for a period of 2 years and at the same time requires an annual Return of Information to check and update the provider's/language centre's scope. In addition to biennial Quality Review Visits, short notice and unannounced site visits may occur at any time. The CEA accreditation process promotes continuous improvement and follow-up and requires annual reporting to ensure it.

BALEAP requires an Interim Declaration of Maintenance of Standards and a spot check may be carried out at any time during the four-year accreditation period. BAC/IELP awards accreditation for a period of 3 years, subject to a satisfactory interim inspection and meeting all the responsibilities of an accredited provider.

Accreditation UK includes spot checks which are routinely carried out within 18 months of first granting accreditation. Between inspections accredited members must provide an Annual Declaration. In order to ensure that standards are maintained between inspections, each year a number of accredited providers chosen at random receive unannounced interim visits.

Eaquals requires accredited members to conduct a mid-cycle self-review and submit a report which includes an account of new developments and a report on the implementation of the last inspection's recommendations.

FINEEC organises national follow-up seminars to support the development of quality systems in HEIs. One of the key goals of the seminars is to give feedback on

post-audit development work and to offer institutions the opportunity to discuss the development of quality systems and exchange experiences and good practices related to quality work.

Accreditation processes are mostly similar because accreditation agencies by and large set similar goals and standards. The schemes share fundamental operating principles and ethical guidelines such as impartiality and objectivity, transparency and evidence-based evaluation. Some common elements and major types of mechanisms have been identified such as eligibility criteria for applicant institutions, vetting of applications, the scope of the main quality standards, site visits and moderation of their outcomes and procedures to safeguard standards. The level of assessment may vary from one accreditation scheme to another. They schemes aim to turn the audit process into a positive, interactive and useful experience for all stakeholders. Though indirectly, they also generate improvements and act as a stimulus for self-reflection at the institutional level, and lead to improvement-driven changes. Inspections and external site visits ensure that the institution's staff are provided with external input for further improvement and encouragement to pursue new challenges.

5.6 From Minimum Standards to Excellence

Accreditation agencies focus primarily on defining quality standards and applying them through carefully designed accreditation processes, and over the years they have gained experience in evaluating the delivery of quality in education. The primary outcome of the accreditation process is the assessment of the overall quality profile of an institution based on a set of transparent standards, and indicators of compliance. It is the concept of compliance that underpins the design of accreditation schemes. Through an accreditation process institutions are required to demonstrate compliance with the standards defined by the scheme. By and large, the stringent requirements for accreditation aim to support institutions in delivering products and services of high quality. Some accreditation schemes take it a step further and identify strengths and formulate recommendations for improvement. However, it does not mean that in a consistent way they assess and promote excellence. In the main, accreditation schemes promote a culture of compliance rather than excellence.

Compliance is associated with regulatory requirements and minimum/threshold standards, whereas excellence is described by attributes such as outstanding and exceptional, and is perceived as a mark of distinction where threshold standards are exceeded and surpassed. How can the transfer from what an institution 'is required to do' to 'what it aspires to achieve' be defined? Could excellence be assessed in a similar fashion that quality is: By means of a criterion-based process in relation to articulated standards?

The fundamental issue is the characteristics of excellence and its definition, even when the concept is applied in a clearly specified context. Excellence tends to be a

synonym of high quality, e.g. 'institution xxx is a centre of excellence'. It does not necessarily mean that the institution meets special criteria developed to access excellence. It could mean that through a process of verification it was confirmed that the institution fulfilled the requirements to be accredited: the requirements to *comply* with demanding quality standards but not to *exceed* them.

'Accreditation is a mark of excellence' is quite often claimed and no further attributes are quoted. Even when accreditation schemes talk about excellence, they refer to an ambiguous concept of excellence, or a quest for excellence rather than defined parameters. The question of how to measure excellence remains open. Do excellence frameworks differ from quality standards which define compliance? Where is the borderline? Are ethical values, corporate social responsibility, visionary leadership, focus on the future or managing for innovation key areas to assess excellence? Should areas such as institutional governance and policies, programme design and delivery, learning environment and staff profile be assessed in terms compliance with minimum requirements rather than excellence? There are more questions than answers.

It seems that the challenges accreditation schemes face have two dimensions. One dimension is the development phase: Defining excellence, specifying its tangible features, and transparent criteria for assessment. The second one is related to the rationale behind the existence of accreditations schemes, and there are fundamental issues which should be raised. To what extent will accreditation agencies be interested in promoting excellence? How will the requirement to meet outstanding standards affect perception of accreditation schemes by the industry? Will such standards discourage some institutions from applying for accreditation? Would not it be safer for accreditation schemes to operate in the realm of what is *achievable* rather than what is *aspirational*?

This said, excellence in accreditation is gradually becoming a trend, especially for agencies which have been in operation for more than a decade and where the institutions they work with have gone through three or more accreditation cycles. FINEEC and Eaquals, for example, attempt to reward excellence through a set of additional criteria and indicators.

5.7 Conclusion

The current highly competitive environment presents new challenges for all stakeholders, both educational institutions and accreditation agencies, and it has mobilised some of them to go beyond simply assessing quality and maintaining it. The new challenge will be not only to strive for excellence in educational institutions but to define it and make it an integral part of accreditation schemes. This is what accreditation agencies face in order to secure their own sustainability in the longer term. It seems that the time has come to revise the approach and make a clear distinction between the minimum/threshold standards and requirements and a criteria-based approach to evaluate excellence. Exceeding high standards rather than

fulfilling the minimum requirements, however robust they are, should mark the next stage in the development of education, and for accreditation agencies the imperative should be to define the criteria and parameters to measure excellence. To go beyond basic quality checking and maintaining standards should be a principle embedded in any accreditation process.

The common assumption is that the incentive and motivation to pursue accreditation is to raise the quality of language instruction, improve student performance, set and maintain quality standards, increase visibility, promote transparency, collegiality and disseminate good practice. However, it is difficult to measure the impact and outcomes of accreditation and to assess the effectiveness of accreditation schemes on internal quality assurance processes. If accreditation is a process which includes self-review mechanisms, then it can be argued that it contributes to the improvement of teaching and learning standards. Whether the quality of language education would have changed without accreditation schemes, is still an open question. The quest for quality is a never ending journey and the challenges the institutions and the accrediting agencies face—the fit between the commercial and the tangible, the developmental and the educational—still remains subject to wide debate.

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Part II
National Perspectives on Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Chapter 6
Quality in Higher Education in Turkey

Hacer Şivil

Plan, Organize, Integrate, Motivate, and Measure.
Peter F. Drucker

Abstract Quality in higher education derives from Total Quality Management (TQM) in business, which is a management philosophy put forward in 1900s. Pioneered by the USA and England in 1980s, the philosophy was adapted into education. Increases in student population, globalisation, technology, government reforms, and English being 'lingua franca' are the main reasons searching quality assurance and accreditation. The Bologna process and policy forums and conferences on accreditation and quality in higher education have put policy-makers from ministries of education, educators themselves, and university administrators from many countries under pressure to adopt, customise, and apply a system to prove their quality of education. In this chapter, to be able to compare and contrast quality education systems in higher education, practices in some countries including Turkey will be mentioned. Common problems that affect the quality of education in Turkey will be explained, and practices conducted by YÖKAK and some suggestions will be presented.

6.1 Introduction

Quality in higher education derives from Total Quality Management (TQM) in business, which is a management philosophy put forward by Frederic E. Taylor in the 1900s and then developed by W. Edwards Deming, Joseph M. Juran, Philip Crosby, A. Feigenbaum, and Masaaki Imai. TQM focuses on customers, processes,

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_6

continuous improvement, and growth. Pioneered by the United States and England in the 1980s, the philosophy was later adapted into education. Thus, 'qualified product' in business has come to refer to 'qualified people' in education.

A number of factors affecting universities—increase in student population, globalisation, technology, government reforms, and English being the current lingua franca—have become the primary reasons for the search for quality assurance (QA) and accreditation. Since the turn of the new century, the development of ever more capable internet technology has meant that globalisation and internationalisation have gained importance throughout much of the world, including Turkey.

In addition, the demand for higher education in Turkey has increased, and quality in education has gained importance. Based on data provided by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), the number of university students attending over 190 higher education institutions was 6,394,042 in 2014–2015, 6,689,185 in 2015–2016, and 7,189,987 in 2016–2017 (Akit, 2016; YÖK n.d.-a, n.d.-b). However, the increase in quantity is not always aligned with an increase in the quality of education.

Compared to many European countries, the proportion of the young population in Turkey is high. According to a 2016 Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) report, the population compared to the previous year increased by 1,073,818, reaching a total of 79,814,871. In terms of the total population, the 0–14, 15–64, and 65+ age groups account for 27.7%, 68%, and 8%, respectively. The report showed that the dynamic population was high, and within the dynamic population, males and females were almost equal. That is, of the 15–64 age group, totalling 54,237,586, 68.4% are male and 67.5% are female (TÜİK, 2016). Though Turkey has a competitive advantage, due to the quality of its foreign language education, graduates may not use their assets in business life.

To address such issues, the Bologna process, implemented by the European Union, and policy forums and conferences on accreditation and quality in higher education have put policy-makers from ministries of education, educators, and university administrators from many countries, including Turkey, under pressure to adopt, customise, and apply a system to prove their quality of education. Having considered the current language education in the Turkish education system and the quality of its individual components, authorities should pinpoint the reasons why, from primary school to university level, most Turkish students are not able to become fluent speakers of a foreign language.

It is time for universities and authorities in Turkey to pay attention to quality management in their language education. The prevalence of English in the global market makes studying it necessary no matter the department; in many cases, not only knowing English, but also knowing other languages provides a competitive advantage to prospective businesspeople. Thus, a well-qualified language education can help students to take part in the international business arena and gain a competitive advantage. In addition, for economic growth and competition, quality higher education, research, and innovation are vital.

6.2 Total Quality Management

Learning is not compulsory…neither is survival.
W. Edwards Deming

Although Frederick Winslow Taylor was the pioneer of applying scientific methods in business to increase labour productivity in the 1920s, his approach, and the following applications, such as that of Henry Fayol, who claimed that quality could be provided through total control of the production cycle, it was Professor W. Edwards Deming who introduced a more sophisticated approach called Total Quality Management (TQM) (Luburić, 2014, p. 59; Thalner, 2005, p. 1).

The Industrial Revolution and a number of conflicts culminating in World War I and World War II all played a crucial role in the shift from quantity of products to the quality of production. Though Deming developed TQM based on his experiences in US industry before and during World War II, both Joseph M. Juran and he adapted it to Japanese industry in the 1950s, where it was widely accepted. In his book, *Out of the Crisis*, published in 1986, Deming pointed out that his management principles could be applied in service sectors (Crawford & Shutler, 1999, p. 67). TQM originated with Walter A. Shewhart of Bell Laboratories, who tried to develop a system of measuring a variance in production systems known as statistical process control (SPC). Deming was hired to teach SPC and quality control to the United States Defence industry during World War II; however, after the war, most United States companies stopped using SPC and TQM procedures (Vasu, Steward & Garson, 1998, p. 236). In the 1950s, Deming taught the Japanese a new management system, which enabled Japanese companies to be awarded more than 100 prizes between 1951 and 1985, and the system started to gain importance in the 1980s in the United States. Like Deming, Juran, too, gave some invaluable seminars about total quality to the Japanese after World War II (Glenn, 2008, p. 28–29).

In general, TQM can be defined as the process of continuous improvement of all established activities and the active participation of all employees of an organisation to achieve efficiency and effectiveness by satisfying the needs of employees, customers, and the target group (Aykaç & Özer, 2006, p. 174). In this system, customer satisfaction has the foremost importance. All members of an organisation participate in improving processes, products, services, and the culture in which they work. General principles, by means of which Japanese corporations such as Toyota have taken their present forms, are listed as follows (Balcı, 2005, p. 197; Bengisu, 2007, p. 742):

- Customer-focused
- Total employee involvement/Teamwork
- Leadership
- Process-centred
- Integrated system
- Strategic and systematic approach
- Continual improvement—Kaizen

- Fact-based decision making
- Communications

These principles demonstrate that TQM is an endless process and focuses on customer satisfaction. That is why TQM creates a culture that foresees competition and assists organisations to be both innovative and creative (Karahan & Kuzu, 2014, p. 24).

6.3 Quality in Higher Education

People only accept change in necessity and see necessity only in a crisis.
Jean Monnet

Customers specify what quality is. That is, whatever customers expect from a product or service represents its quality for them (Bengisu, 2007, p.739). In education, quality can be defined as fitness of purpose, mission and goals, and fitness for purposes, aligned with defined standards (Watty, 2003, p. 216). However, it is hard to define because there are various stakeholders including students, families, industry, and society, whose fitness of and for purposes might be different.

TQM is indeed a means to meet the needs and expectations of all internal and external customers: Students, teachers, school staff, society, social, and private institutions. Internal customers should feel proud of the training and activities carried out at their school, and external customers should feel satisfied with the qualifications of students and alumni (Serin & Aytekin, 2009, p. 86). That is why, in general, quality management in education is a part of management aimed at achieving quality goals through planning, monitoring, assuring, and improving quality. Although education is ongoing and complementary, the quality in higher education in the Turkish setting will be the focus of this study. This is a point that leads us to TQM.

Quality in education was initiated in England and the United States in the 1980s. Its main purpose is to provide the best to people. In other words, a *qualified product* in business refers to a *qualified individual* in education. In this respect, the concept of quality in higher education is important to bring well-qualified individuals into the Turkish economy (Karahan & Kuzu, 2014, p. 24). However, another main reason why these countries applied for TQM was due to changing student numbers, greater expenses, and government budget cuts. The implementation of TQM was/is a way to attract more students. In the United States, it is called accreditation, while in Europe it is called Quality Assurance Systems (Rehber, 2007, p. 3–4).

Today, there are a number of changes in areas such as the economy, politics, socio-cultural norms, science, and technology. Those changes have a major impact on higher education. Increases in population, globalisation, students, teachers, institutional and program mobility, the information society, advanced technology, government reforms, competition, demand for higher education, and English being the current *lingua franca* are the main factors that especially affect services, finance, management, and methods within universities all around the world.

Like many countries that use information technology actively, are involved in foreign trade, and conduct research, Turkey is affected by globalisation. In addition,

the Turkish media and educational system reflect the fact that English is the most commonly spoken foreign language in Turkey. Almost everyone is exposed to a certain degree of English, and they do their best to use this language when needed. However, in spite of being aware of its benefits and necessities, Turkish people still do not feel confident enough while using English, which forces policy-makers to re-examine language education (Aktan, 2009, p. 40).

Globalisation can be defined as the interconnection of global economic, political, cultural, and environmental processes that make existing borders irrelevant (Steger, 2003, p. 7). In education, higher education has surpassed domestic borders, mobility has gained importance, and competition has been on the rise. The concepts of lifelong learning, distance education, e-learning, and online education have also contributed to some radical changes in education. Last but not least, knowing English has become more important than ever (Aktan, 2009, p. 41).

Education institutions including universities are required to prove their quality, and this leads to competition. Since the number of students and higher education institutions is increasing, it is becoming more and more difficult to finance higher education institutions. As a result, decision-makers have begun to show more interest in quality assurance (Table 6.1).

Based on the data collected on September 12, 2016, the number of universities in selected countries is as follows:

According to reports of international organisations such as World Bank, UNESCO, and the OECD, while the number of students in higher education was around 20 million in 1985, it rose to 26 million in 1990 and 38 million in 1995. The

Table 6.1 Number of universities in selected countries (number of universities[a])

Country	University count
India	8407
United States	5758
Philippines	2060
Argentina	1705
Spain	1415
Mexico	1341
Bangladesh	1268
Indonesia	1236
Japan	1223
France	1062
China	1054
Russia	1108
Iran	343
South Korea	322
Vietnam	209
Turkey	196
Egypt	173
Thailand	158

[a]http://www.aneki.com/universities.html

estimated number was 100 million in 2007, and it is predicted that it will eventually reach 200 million. Based on data collected from 1998 to 2003, in higher education institutions, the demand increased by 0.2% in Japan, 2.2% in the United States, 3.1% in Europe, 8% in India, and 20% in China (YÖK, 2007, p. 14). Similarly, the number of university students is increasing every year in Turkey. While the increase was almost 0.5% in 2014–2015 and 2015–2016, it exceeded 0.7% in 2015–2016 and 2016–2017.

In line with this trend, the number of universities in Turkey increases every year. The number of universities has increased continuously since 1933 and the founding of İstanbul University. The total number of universities had reached 19 by 1982, and with the establishment of eight new state universities in that year, this increased to 27. In 1984, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, the first *foundation* university, was established; private universities are not permitted in Turkey. By 1987, the total number of universities had reached 29, and by 1992, there were 53. After 1992, the number of foundation universities increased, while the number of state universities remained stable.

In 1994, there were only three foundation universities, but this number had reached 24 by 2006. Between 2006 and 2011, 88 new universities, 38 of which were foundations, were established. In 2011, the number of state universities was 103 and there were 62 foundation universities. In other words, between 2006 and 2011, the total number of universities reached 165, an increase of 115% (Günay & Günay, 2011). As of 2015, this total had reached 193, 76 of which were foundation universities and 8 of which were foundation vocational colleges (Durmuş, 2015).

In general, universities are publicly funded, and the number of private universities is rather limited in Turkey. In Central and Eastern European countries, it is thought that governments should control universities. Therefore, the teaching staff and administrative staff in these institutions are public employees. For this reason, proposals for making universities fee-based, and making legal arrangements for them to earn extra income from public resources, face significant difficulties.

After granting higher education institutional autonomy in some countries, governments have required more transparency and accountability, which has led universities to implement QA or accreditation procedures. These procedures include planning, managing, and controlling activities (Orsinger, 2006, p. 1).

6.4 Language Quality Systems in Higher Education Institutions in the World

Quality is not an act, it is a habit.
Aristotle

Countries have different names for different forms of quality assurance systems. While there is only one quality assessment body in some countries, in some others there is more than one. In particular, countries with a federal structure (the United States, Germany, Mexico) have more than one quality assessment body. In some

countries (Austria), the regulations concerning the quality assurance system are limited to certain schools (e.g. private institutions). Due to these factors, the quality assessment methods used to evaluate these institutions may differ. Some of them are applied to the institution (Australia), others are applied to the program (the Netherlands), and some are applied to both, all of which are considered to be valid. In general, quality assurance systems evaluate the performance of higher education institutions in terms of education, research, and management (Küçükcan & Gür, 2009, p. 73–74).

In 2016, the sixth annual ranking of national systems of higher education was conducted by the Universitas 21 (U21). U21 used 25 attributes to evaluate fifty national higher education systems. Countries were ranked overall as well as in the following areas: Resources, Environment, Connectivity, and Output. The results given in Table 6.2 show that the Turkish higher education system was ranked 40 out of 50 (Williams, Leahy, & Jensen, 2017, p. 6). Organisations such as U21 and QS Higher Education System Strength Rankings evaluate higher education systems and organisations such as the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), The Webometrics Ranking of World Universities, and the Times Higher Education (THE). World Universities Rankings evaluate the best universities in the world and ensure that the results are consistent (Güner & Levent, 2017, p. 2–3).

6.5 Accreditation and Quality Assurance in the United States and Europe

6.5.1 The United States of America

American higher education relies on the philosophical foundations of the Jeffersonian democratic understanding. Between 1801 and 1809, Thomas Jefferson, the American president, adopted the principles of public education, free voting, free publication, limited centralised administration, and a democratic understanding of governance that is not based on a class system. Since the U.S. Constitution does not give the responsibility of education to the federal government, the federal government has a limited role. In the United States, there is no Ministry of Education (Eckel & King, 2004, p. 3).

Training associations are generally provided with accreditation and standards, and this is done by several private institutions. In some states, an official authority is advisory and directs at a limited level, thus serving as an intermediary between the university and the local government. Sometimes the limited influence of the provinces can still be used to achieve policies within universities. The federal government does not provide direct operational support, so universities are in need of funding. Regarding academic decisions, there are accreditation organisations and membership associations. Accrediting organisations establish minimum standards such as curricula, faculty qualifications, student learning outcomes, student services, and financial health. They monitor quality assurance, but they do not mandate

Table 6.2 U21 ranking 2018[a]

Rank			Score		Rank			Score	
(2018)	(2017)	Country		(2017)	(2018)	(2017)	Country		(2017)
1	1	United States	100.0	100.0	26	25	Malaysia	55.7	56.7
2	2	Switzerland	88.0	86.9	27	24	Czech Republic	55.6	56.9
3	3	United Kingdom	82.6	85.5	28	28	Italy	54.0	54.5
4	5	Sweden	82.4	83.4	29	28	Slovenia	53.6	54.5
5	4	Denmark	81.7	83.5	30	30	China	52.4	52.7
6	9	Finland	79.7	79.9	31	32	Poland	51.3	50.0
6	8	Netherlands	79.7	80.0	32	35	Greece	49.5	47.7
8	7	Canada	79.6	80.2	33	33	Russia	49.3	49.9
9	6	Singapore	79.5	80.8	34	34	Chile	49.0	49.4
10	10	Australia	78.6	79.6	35	38	Slovakia	48.7	45.9
11	11	Austria	75.8	75.0	36	31	Hungary	48.3	50.8
12	13	Norway	74.5	73.9	37	37	South Africa	47.7	46.6
13	12	Belgium	73.3	74.2	38	35	Ukraine	47.4	47.7
14	15	New Zealand	71.1	72.1	39	42	Brazil	45.0	43.1
15	16	Germany	69.2	68.8	40	41	Argentina	44.2	43.5
16	18	France	68.5	67.5	***41***	***40***	***Turkey***	***44.0***	***44.0***
17	14	Hong Kong SAR	67.8	73.7	42	39	Serbia	42.8	44.1
18	16	Israel	66.3	68.8	43	44	Romania	42.2	41.6
19	19	Ireland	64.8	66.7	44	45	Bulgaria	42.0	40.2
20	20	Japan	61.9	63.2	45	43	Croatia	41.0	42.5
21	21	Taiwan-China	60.2	60.7	46	46	Mexico	40.3	40.0
22	22	Korea	58.0	59.0	47	47	Thailand	40.0	39.7
23	25	Saudi Arabia	57.0	56.7	48	48	Iran	38.9	38.4
24	27	Portugal	56.4	55.8	49	49	India	36.8	36.7
25	23	Spain	56.2	57.3	50	50	Indonesia	33.5	33.3

[a]https://universitas21.com/sites/default/files/2018-05/U21_Rankings%20Report_0418_FULL_LR%20%281%29.pdf

how institutions meet these standards. Membership associations, which can be either institutions or individuals, represent the interests of an organisation to the federal and/or state government (Eckel & King, 2004, p. 3–4).

After World War II, there was a rapid increase in the number of universities. This required the generation of new programs and the development of new approaches. However, expenditures and reductions in research support and student numbers required American universities to make some changes. While the share of government funding for the university in the 1980s was over 50%, this ratio declined to 30% by 2010 (Lyall & Sell, 2010, p. 8). To be able to attract more foreign students and to get the most out of the market share, universities in the United States and Europe started to place importance on quality in a new and more aggressive market.

This seems to imply that improved quality comes from making English compulsory to be able to follow lectures and socialise for non-native students.

In 2002, more than one fourth of the nearly two million foreign students to the United States provided $12 billion income to the country. The total number of foreign students in 2000–2001 was over 500,000 in the United States, over 200,000 in the United Kingdom, 185,000 in Germany, and 135,000 in France (Yepes, 2006, p. 112).

Due to its administrative and economic structure, geographical features, and historical development, the United States has a decentralised system. The system is highly flexible and based on institutional diversity. The external quality assessment procedure is one of accreditations. The American accreditation system is less bureaucratic than European systems and gives importance to more self-regulation. Accreditation is done entirely on a voluntary basis and non-accredited institutions have the right to provide education. In this multi-cantered mechanism, all the units are in close cooperation and coordination. In this respect, the education system and the practice in schools throughout the United States differ little in detail. (Avlar, n.d.; Özer, Gür, & Küçükcan, 2010, p. 14).

In 2010, the U.S. government passed legislation requiring that all Intensive English Programmes (IEPs) be accredited by a recognised body (see Reeves, Chap. 4). Based on the legislation, only IEPs with accreditation granted by an agency recognised by the U.S. Department of Education can be authorised to issue the documents that international students need to acquire an F-1 student visa. The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) and the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET) are primarily concerned with IEP accreditation. Both American professional membership organisations for English language programmes, English USA and University and College Intensive English Programs (UCIEP), support the passage of the 2010 legislation (ICEF Monitor, 2016).

6.5.2 Europe

With regard to the situation in Europe, the representatives of higher education from 29 European countries (now it is 47) signed the Bologna Process in 1999. The Bologna Process was a series of meetings attended by ministers responsible for higher education. At these meetings, policy decisions were made to set up a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 (Avrupa Komisyonu, 2007, p. 10; YÖK n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Thus, the process can be claimed to involve the collective effort of many parties, and its focus is the introduction of the three-cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate), strengthened quality assurance, and easier recognition of qualifications and periods of study (European Commission n.d.). The meetings and their contents are available in Figure 6.1.

The Bologna Agreement aims to pave the way for increased mobility among students, teaching staff, and researchers. *Lifelong learning*, *learning-to-learn*, and *autonomous learning* are all concepts that universities are expected to foster.

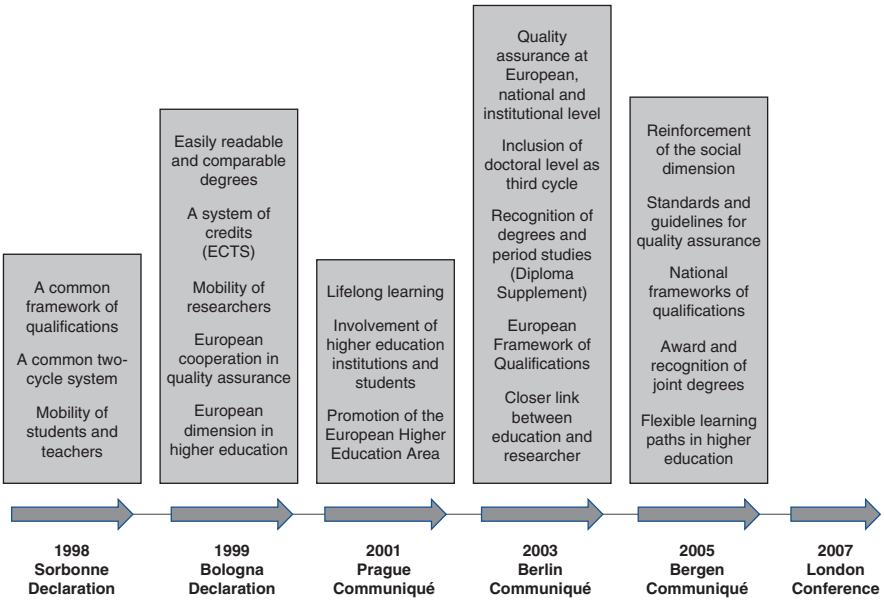

Fig. 6.1 Bologna process timeline (Edwards-Schachter, Tovar & Ruiz, 2014)

Language competence is necessary for mobility and employability. For this reason, not only being competent in English but also at least in two other languages is crucial. More and more European universities, such as those in the Netherlands, Finland, and Sweden, have shifted to English as the medium of instruction. However, other countries like Spain, France, and Italy have agreed to implement the reforms only to a certain extent (Räisänen & Fortanet-Gómez, 1984, p. 1).

The Berlin Communiqué (2003) focused on the importance of language learning. It states that only through a better knowledge of European modern languages, it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among non-natives (Räisänen & Fortanet-Gómez, 1984, p. 18–19) (Fig. 6.1).

6.6 Quality in the Turkish Higher Education System

Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort. There must be the will to produce a superior thing.
John Ruskin

The EU published the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, and Turkey participated in the Bologna Process in 2001. By 2010, Turkey had prepared its policies in higher education in terms of transparency, publicity, and mobility. In this respect, higher education institutions in Turkey started to pay attention to not only program-based accreditation, such as engineering, but also to foreign language education. Yet, the structuring is not systematic.

However, Middle East Technical University (METU) became the first university to be accredited by the U.S.-based Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET) in 1994. Then, Bosporus University, Istanbul Technical University Bilkent, and Northern Mediterranean University were granted accreditation by ABET. With the invaluable expertise gained, by 2002, the Engineering Evaluation Committee (MÜDEK) was established (Süngü & Bayrakçı, 2010, p. 911).

As seen, QA or accreditation is important within the competitive Turkish higher education context. So as to determine the principles for evaluating and improving quality in a variety of fields across higher education institutions, *The Regulation on Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education Institutions*,[1] which complies with the recommendations and criteria of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA, was enacted on September 20, 2005. The Regulations require annual internal and external assessment every five years and the results should be open to the public (YÖK 2007, European Commission, 2007, p. 299). The Sorbone Declaration (1998) and the Bologna Declaration (1999) have played crucial roles in Turkey to initiate standardisation. By means of these declarations, educational policies imposed by the European Union (EU) have been recognised and adopted by the Turkish government. Additionally, in 1999, some government agencies were appointed to cooperate with European educational and research institutions to achieve alignment with the level of European quality in higher education (Mizikaci, 2003, p. 99–100).

Although quality commissions have been established, such as the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (YÖDEK), the Academic Evaluation Committee (ADEK), and the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (YÖKAK), none have focused specifically on foreign language education in higher education institutions. In addition, the Regulation relating to the Turkish Quality Framework issued on March 25th, 2018 in the *Official Gazette*[2] does not refer to foreign language quality.

However, Prof. Dr. Yekta Saraç, president of YÖK, recently highlighted that whether language preparatory programs are granted accreditation by a national or international body would be announced in the guidelines of the Examination of Council of Higher Education (YKS).

6.6.1 A Language Quality System in Higher Education Institutions in Turkey

A bad system will defeat a good person every time.
Edwards Deming

Both parents and students look for prestige, the return on investment on education, and the value of student effort. In this respect, language quality comes to the fore

[1] https://www.myk.gov.tr/TRR/File4.pdf

[2] http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2018/03/20180325.htm

because high demand in higher education, internationalisation, information technologies, faculty and student mobility programs, and competitiveness, national requirements in the Higher Education Draft Bill (Article 47), and the Turkish Higher Qualifications Framework make English language education quality an indispensable part of education. While the former focuses primarily on national and international quality of higher education institutions and pinpoints the duties of the Higher Education Quality Board, the latter classifies the exit level of language from associate's degree to doctoral degree based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR). Accordingly, the exit levels range from A2 to C1, which forces universities in Turkey to be accredited to ensure that they meet or exceed both national and international standards of language education.

However, according to the results of the 2013 survey conducted by the British Council (BC) and the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Turkey is underperforming in the area of English language teaching (ELT) due to inadequate teaching in primary and secondary schools. Further research conducted by the BC was intended to look for examples of good practice in one university for the purpose of disseminating them throughout the education system (TEPAV & BC, 2015, p. 13).

Yet, some English preparatory programs have already been granted accreditation by United States, European, or profit-oriented bodies namely the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services (Equals), and Pearson Assured (formerly Edexel Assured) in Turkey since they are aware that they must be seen to offer best practices.

Regarding the CEA accreditation process, it begins with an eligibility application. This includes curricular documents, a list of faculty and staff with training and experience, information about student services, and the administrative structure. Accordingly, CEA ensures that the program can be reviewed based on 44 standards under 11 main areas: Mission, Curriculum, Faculty, Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies, Administrative and Fiscal Capacity, Student Services, Recruiting, Length and Structure of Program of Study, Student Achievement, Student Complaints, and Program Development, Planning, and Review. After the site meets eligibility requirements, participants are invited to attend a 2-day workshop, held each year at the annual TESOL convention and twice yearly at the CEA office, to learn more about the standards and receive guidance. The site submits a self-study plan, which includes a timeline for the self-study, a target date for the site visit, and a list of committees and members. Within 18 months, the site prepares its self-study report that consists of five parts, namely: Overview of the Program or Institution, Self-Study Process, Standard Areas, Summary, and Indices of Supporting Documents. CEA provides a template for the report as well as requirements for submission. Accordingly, each response to each standard requires three sections: Section A: Required Responses (Description of current operations to show how the standard is met); Section B: Documents in the report and Documents on site; and Section C: Self-Recommendations. A team of three reads the report and conducts a three-day on-site visit, including class visits, a tour of facilities, and interviews with

Table 6.3 Pearson assured steps in accreditation process (Pearson, 2018)

Step 1	Contact the local representative to get information
Step 2	The Relevant Pearson Assured Guidance and Policy Documents and Pearson Assured Application Form are sent to the site, and the site completes them
Step 3	A Quality Advisor visists the site to conduct a review of the quality management system
Step 4	If all quality measures are met, the site will receive Pearson Assured Status for 1 year, as well as marketing information and files for using the Pearson logo. If all quality measures are not met, Pearson Assured works with the site to improve quality systems and a second site visit is arranged

administrators, faculty, and students. Site visits are conducted by qualified professionals from the field who are trained as peer reviewers. The review team reports its findings and site writes a response. Finally, the 13-member CEA Commission uses the self-study report, the review team report, the response from the site, and a review of finances to make its accreditation decision (CEA, 2018).

Eaquals has a more or less similar process. It normally takes up to 2 years. First, the site sends an initial enquiry to the Secretariat for information and advice. Then, the site works with the Eaquals Self Assessment Handbook. Before the full inspection, the site might request an Advisory Visit. The site receives a written report after the Advisory Visit and implements further developments in line with the recommendations from the Advisory Visit. Finally, the site applies to Eaquals for a first inspection at least four months before its preferred inspection date, and it is followed by a report and verdict eight weeks after the inspection.

Pearson Assured is based on Quality Objectives which provide a framework for measuring the quality of 40 objectives under three main areas: Managing the Organisation, Managing Learning/Training, and Managing Assessment. The accreeditation process consists of four steps (Pearson, 2018) (Table 6.3).

Once Pearson Assured Status is received, it is valid for one year. At the end of the year, a different Quality Advisor visits the site to inspect whether quality standards are still maintained. (Pearson Assured Handbook, 2016).

Below, Table 6.5. summarises the accreditation process of these bodies. Even though accreditation processes differ in some respects, they have similar orientations on many topics. As seen in Tables 6.4 and 6.5, CEA and Equals offer a more systematic approach and outcomes play a crucial role in their standards.

6.7 Challenges and Suggested Solutions

For many phenomena, 80% of consequences stem from 20% of the causes
Joseph M. Juran

A survey conducted in 2006 (YÖK, 2007, p. 131) highlighted the major problems perceived by the citizens of Turkey:

- Unemployment (29.6%)
- Terrorism and national security (14.9%)

Table 6.4 Process comparisons (Staub, 2018)

Process	CEA	Eaquals	Pearson
Submit Application	✓	✓	✓
Host Preliminary Visit[a]	✓		
Attend Self-Study Workshop	✓	✓	
Develop/Submit Self-Study Plan	✓		
Submit Comprehensive Self-Study	✓	✓	✓
Advisory Visit[a]		✓	
Site Inspection/Quality Advisory Visit	✓	✓	✓
Review & Decision by Accreditor	✓	✓	✓
Initial Accreditation: 1 Year			✓
Initial Accreditation: 4 Years		✓	
Initial Accreditation: 1 or 5 Years	✓		
Reaccreditation: 1 or 10 Years			
Reaccreditation: 4 Years		✓	
Reaccreditation: Every Year			✓

[a]Upon request by the site

Table 6.5 Standards/objectives comparison table (Staub, 2018)

Scheme Standards/Objectives	CEA 11/44	Eaquals 12/39	Pearson 3/9/40
Mission/Educational Philosophy	✓	✓	✓
Curriculum (including assessment)	✓	✓	✓
Human Resources (Qualifications, Recruiting) Curriculum Development Process—CDP)	✓	✓	✓
Facilities/Equipment/Supplies	✓	✓	✓
Administrative (and Fiscal) Capacity	✓	✓	✓
Student Services (including complaints)	✓	✓	✓
Recruiting of Students	✓	✓	✓
Length and Structure	✓	✓	✓
Student Achievement	✓	✓	
Program Development, Planning, and Review	✓	✓	✓

- Cost of living and inflation (9.6%)
- Education (8.7%)

These results suggest that the education system in Turkey is not meeting general expectations. Similarly, a 2016 survey conducted by the BC and TEPAV also indicated that language education falls below the expected level. On the other hand, Turkish students are exposed to English from kindergarten to university. This paradox is an indicator that there are more deficiencies in the Turkish education system than were previously thought.

As previously stated, higher institutions are under the direction of YÖK, which should revise regulations and make them more applicable. Learning a language is a

long process and, within this process, not only the physical infrastructure and technology, but also well-educated language teachers should be given importance. Those teachers should be given more opportunities to go to English-speaking counties and teach English there. Thus, they will become more fluent and have the opportunity to teach in multinational classes, which will also improve their techniques and approaches. Moreover, the number of students in each class should be limited because language requires interaction. Like teachers, students should also have the opportunity to go abroad. The Erasmus program is a great opportunity, but it is only for graduate students. If a similar approach is taken into consideration, it will increase the challenge and motivation among students. In addition, if the language exit level of students is defined in high school, their entry and exit levels in university preparatory programs will be higher.

In addition, there are different dynamics operating in different parts of the country. This can result in the learning process being hindered due to issues such as war or terrorist attacks. Some precautions should be taken against such extreme cases. Students who are considered to be at risk might be placed in different universities until the risk lessens, and instead of opening new universities, current universities must be strengthened.

Universities in the United States, England, Canada, and Holland are in the top ten ranks of higher education systems because they have higher levels of autonomy and their administration committee members are appointed by means of a merit-based selection process, which encourages a more autonomous higher education system (Güner & Levent, 2017, p. 1–2). In the United States, universities are shifting toward becoming more autonomous in many aspects. In particular, they apply business models to attract funds, allowing them to be less dependent on government funding, and are therefore less subject to government interference. Currently, American universities' main financial sources are students, grants, and public and private sector projects (Mclaughlin, 2005, p. 144–145). That is why a comprehensive analysis and benchmark program is recommended for the higher education system in Turkey. There must be efforts made to decrease the problems caused by an overbearing and confused bureaucracy, which has had wide-ranging effects throughout the Turkish education system. In addition, benchmarking with other countries must be given greater importance so that any changes can be more quickly and easily evaluated. Finally, when universities are inspected, inspectors only monitor whether they are operating according to regulations or not. That is why TQM training is important.

Conversely, the Bologna process has contributed to QA. As an initial response to participation in the Bologna process, an institutional committee called the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Boards (ADEK) was set up at each university to organise and conduct institution-wide QA activities. The boards are also responsible for preparing and submitting annual reports to the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvements (YÖDEK)—established by YÖK in 2005 for academic assessment and quality improvement. Additionally, national QA agencies like the Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programs (MÜDEK), the Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Science

and Art Programs (FEDEK), and the Association for Turkish Psychologists (TPD) have been effective while promoting QA (Ince & Gounko, 2014, p. 190–191). For instance, MÜDEK became a Signatory of the Washington Accord in 2011, which means that all programs accredited by MÜDEK are recognised as equivalent by other Washington Accord Signatories. Furthermore, MÜDEK is authorised to issue the European Accredited Engineer (EUR-ACE) Bachelor Label as of 2009 (MÜDEK, 2018).

Additionally, YÖK formed the National Qualification Framework, first mentioned in the 2003 Berlin Communiqué, in 2006, which gives importance to learning outcomes, so that learners know in advance where their education will lead them. As a result, test scores on university entrance exams are not the only way to evaluate students' achievements (Ince & Gounko, 2014, p. 191–192). In 2014, the YÖK Accreditation Commission (YÖKAK), on QA, was formed to replace YÖDEK, whose main responsibilities are institutional external evaluation, authorisation and recognition of accreditation organisations, and dissemination and internalisation of quality assurance culture.

Aiming to set up a simple, user-friendly, and universal system, YÖKAK has organised meetings with quality assurance and accreditation institutions, QAA (United Kingdom), Hcéres (France), AACSB (United States), AQAS (Germany), and FIBAA (Germany), to exchange ideas about quality assurance approaches in national higher education systems. In these meetings, external evaluation and program accreditation practices in the field of higher education and cooperation possibilities have also been discussed. They have also been organising meetings and establishing cooperation with AACSB, QAA, Hcéres, AQAS, and FIBAA and some institutions in the United States, Britain, Germany, France, Malaysia, South Korea, and a number of countries in the Middle East. In terms of external evaluation, YÖKAK has established a web-based system so as to facilitate quality efforts of universities and perform analysis to complete the first circle of external evaluation of 144 universities by the end of June 2019 (YÖKAK, 2019).

All in all, YÖKAK, as a tool of an ongoing improvement of higher education, has been trying hard to increase the quality of higher education institutions in Turkey by means of networking in the international setting, dealing with diversity, and collaborating with higher education institutions.

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Chapter 7
The Experience of Quality in Higher Education in the United Arab Emirates: In Times of Rapid Change and Complexities

Burcu Tezcan-Unal

Abstract In less than five decades, from offering formal education only in a few schools to a small tribal community to providing a selection of three public and approximately 100 private higher education institutions to the citizens of seven emirates creates a unique context in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is an evolution that corresponds with its remarkable economic growth. Quality assurance of diverse higher educational institutions requires complex schemes to ensure their fitness for purpose, while perhaps development and enhancement aspects need time to mature. The quality of the education is especially important because the UAE yearns for the diversified and knowledge-based economy; one that is led by its own citizens whose contribution to the workforce is currently less than 10%. This chapter highlights contextual complexities in the UAE that might have direct and/or indirect impacts on the quality experiences in the higher education sector, with proposed recommendations.

7.1 Introduction

While emphasizing the rapid and dramatic cultural and social changes in the UAE, Hopkyns (2016) citing Winslow, Honein, and Elzubeir (2002) highlights the paradox that, "Adults who were Bedouins, tending goats and farming dates, have children driving Land Cruisers and studying in America" (p. 89). The UAE's remarkable economic success and modernization owing initially to oil-based revenue since the late 1960s, along with more recent attempts to develop a diversified and knowledge-based economy, have led to the establishment of a record number of higher education institutions (HEI) in a relatively small country. Policy development over the

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_7

years in such areas as improvement of the educational system and encouraging participation of nationals in the workforce has created many complexities, which arguably have an impact on the quality of HEIs in the country. Based on relevant theoretical and empirical research, this chapter will examine the following issues as well as offer viable responses:

What are the main complexities that may affect quality of HEIs in the UAE?
What could be recommended to increase the quality of (higher) education in the UAE that strives to become a knowledge-based economy?

7.1.1 The Higher Education Context in the UAE

In an era following the agricultural revolution and the industrial age, when manufacturing skills (manual labour) predominated, the recent global landscape seems to be shaped by the knowledge era that requires mento-facturing (mental labour) skills in innovation, research, information, and communication technologies (Marquardt, 2011; Weber, 2011). The role of higher education and the critical importance of well-educated human capital in the development of nations have been acknowledged by both scholars and policy-makers, and thus, improving education systems is one of the most important agenda items internationally (Marginson, 2010). The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA, 2017) reports that raising educational standards in order to establish a diversified knowledge-based economy and reducing its oil-dependent gross domestic product (GDP) to 20% by 2021 are the UAE's strategic goals. Thus, it is not surprising for the UAE government to develop policies to enhance the human capital capacity in various HEIs; to invest in research, innovation, and other modern knowledge-based economic systems (Ashour & Fatima, 2016). Nevertheless, Ashour and Fatima (2016) state that although the UAE's global competitiveness reports in quality of education and training show positive trends, there is room for improvement regarding the quality of the graduates and their skills to play an effective role in the knowledge-based society. If "[E]ducational outputs are eventually assessed in the context of their relevance to local, regional, and international labor markets and their contribution to broader national objectives," (Wilkins, 2011, p. 4) it is important to discuss factors that may have an impact on graduates' skills and competences in the UAE.

Arguably, the following factors influence the HE context in the UAE, which merit evaluation before discussing the quality of education:

- The demographic composition of this small Islamic monarchy.
- Federal and non-federal HEIs and multi-layered QA systems.
- HE students' and educators' profiles and orientations.
- The UAE's Vision 2021; to attain ambitious economic and social goals and national workforce.
- Cultural and social landscape of the UAE.

This chapter will briefly analyze these factors while discussing the quality in HE in the country. For clarity, the rather elusive concept of 'quality' (Harvey & Green,

1993) will be framed from the perspective of the quality of the graduates along with the quality of teaching and learning, while considering the expectations of a knowledge-driven economy. Noting that the numerical data regarding percentages in workforce, female participation in the workforce, and private institutions vary between sources, especially due to the reality that things change fast, the most recent available sources are used whenever possible.

7.2 Higher Education and Complexities in the UAE

7.2.1 Economic Breakthrough and Demography

The UAE is a small Muslim Arabian Gulf country governed as a federal monarchy constituting seven emirates, which were among the British-Trucial states until gaining independence in 1971. The UAE is a very ambitious country that has transformed "from rags to riches" within the course of less than fifty years, primarily due to its oil revenue (Shihab, 2001). The local economy of the 1960s, which was based on simple trading, fishing, pearl diving, and farming driven by the tribal inhabitants with little or no formal education (Al Sadik, 2001), has changed into today's highly competitive and diverse business context with world-class initiatives, as well as liberal international business prospects and foreign investment opportunities (Rawazik & Carroll, 2009).

Due to the lack of trained workforce, the UAE's rulers implemented an immigration policy to invite qualified expatriates to build the newly formed nation and modernize the infrastructure (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2014). Rapid economic transformation, based upon liberal policies, has also influenced its demographic composition. According to UAE government records (The Official Portal of the UAE Government, 2018), Emirati nationals comprise approximately 10% of the UAE's population of 9,627,390 people, which has indeed increased dramatically from less than 80,000 dwellers since the early 1960s (Worldometers, 2019). As for workforce proportion though, out of the five million positions in the private sector, only 27,000 of them are held by Emiratis; 60% of nationals are employed in the public sector (The Official Portal of the UAE Government, 2019). That is, historically and currently, the UAE's financial goals have been realized as a result of the expatriate workforce from Asia, South Asia, Africa, and many Western nations (De Bel-Air, 2015). Only nationals may benefit from the free public (higher) education, as provision to all eligible Emiratis is a national policy.

7.2.2 Various HEIs and QA Schemes

Over the years, coupled with the economic growth and an increasingly diverse population with different needs, the number and kinds of HEIs have increased rapidly (O'Sullivan, 2016). According to The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher

Education (QAA) country report (2017), there are approximately 140,000 HE students in the UAE. Of these, approximately one-third (43,000) study in three federal HEIs is for free; 90% are nationals and 10% are fee-paying international students. The remaining two thirds of the higher education student population is enrolled in 100 non-federal, mostly for-profit private HEIs, such as international branch campuses (IBC), emirate-based semi-government HEIs, and other international collaborative partners (QAA, 2017).

The UAE opened its first federal university, The United Arab Emirates University, in 1976 in Al-Ain. In 1989, the Higher Colleges of Technology were established to provide technical-vocational training to the nation's male and female students separately in each emirate. The youngest federal HEI in the country, Zayed University, was opened in Abu Dhabi and in Dubai (the two largest emirates) in 1998, to offer tertiary education to the nation's female students; males were admitted after 2009.

The semi-independent status of the seven emirates of the UAE allows them to implement independent policies and economic models from the federal government. One particular policy, especially in the emirate of Dubai followed by the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah (RAK), has attracted foreign-based HE providers in the free zones, which are purpose-built geographical locations that allow tax-free investments and other incentives (QAA, 2017). As a result, by hosting 34 IBCs, the UAE is now one of the top four international educational hubs along with China (34), Singapore (12), and Malaysia (12) (C-BERT, n.d.).

Outside the free zones, emirate-based HEIs such as American University of Sharjah, University of Dubai, and Abu Dhabi University are also on offer, as well as highly prestigious universities such as Paris Sorbonne and New York University funded by the Abu Dhabi emirate to establish themselves with a less business-oriented strategy than that of Dubai and RAK (QAA, 2017). Without employing gender segregation, the private for-profit institutions offer HE to non-Emiratis as well as to nationals who could not meet the entry requirements and/or who do not choose to go to a federal university for a variety of reasons such as commuting issues, not having desired majors, or opting for a more internationally recognized institution for better employment possibilities (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012).

Regarding the QA schemes, national accreditation through the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) has been mandated for all the federal universities since 2014 (see, e.g., QAA, 2017). Beforehand, federal institutions were either self-regulated, or sought international external QA as in the case of Zayed University, which gained accreditation from the Middle States Commission for Higher Education in 2008. The CAA also accredits all private HEIs operating outside free zones for their official recognition in the UAE. Conversely, QA of those HEIs in the free zones are provided by emirate-based agencies such as the Knowledge and Human Development Authority in Dubai, and the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK), until recently known as Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) in Abu Dhabi. The IBCs in the free zones are also required to comply with the QA schemes of their mainland institutions, which may not always correspond well with the US model that CAA follows (Ashour, 2017). In addition,

several for-profit HEIs in the free zones have opted for CAA accreditation, even though they are not required to do so because they aim to have the degrees that they provide to be recognized by the UAE authorities. As indicated in O'Sullivan's study at a private institution in the UAE, for faculty members, "there is always an upcoming accreditation visit to prepare for" (O'Sullivan, 2015, p. 8), and they need to meet the criteria of different QA agencies, "… each with varying demands, which sometimes caused some practices to be paused," as corroborated by another study from a federal institution (Tezcan-Unal, Winston, & Qualter, 2019, p. 12).

In short, QA practices seem to overwhelm the HEIs, which may not leave quality time for pertinent quality enhancement and development issues. While, on the one hand, their efforts provide structural effectiveness (Stensaker, 2011), with the aim of improving learning dynamics (Tezcan-Unal et al., 2019), they may also lead to a compliance culture (Cardoso, Rosa, & Stensaker, 2016).

7.2.3 Student and Educators' Profiles and Quality Concerns

The preceding section summarized quality matters in the UAE from a 'fitness for purpose' (Harvey & Newton, 2004, 2007) perspective. This section will focus on the profiles and status of educators and enrolled students as well as majors offered, aiming to reflect on deeper issues that may affect quality in HEIs.

Fox (2007) reports four founding principles that constitute the HE policy: establishing and fully funding federal universities, hiring mostly international and highly qualified faculty, providing it for free to all the eligible nationals, and making English the medium of instruction (EMI). Thus, the language proficiency of the entry level students to pursue tertiary studies in an EMI setting has been an issue in the national agenda. Since 2016, federal HEIs have recruited post-secondary Emirati students, whose general education, English language ability, and readiness to enter an HE are measured by The Emirates Standardized Test (EmSAT). The minimum entry level of English required corresponds with an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 5.0, which does not align with international guidance provided by IELTS for students to pursue a bachelor's degree in an EMI setting (Schoepp, 2018). Correspondingly, in Tezcan-Unal's (2018) study, academics highlight the challenges they face due to low levels of English proficiency and its potential impact on quality issues. Stated differently, over the years and despite many costly educational reforms to increase the English competency of students, success in this area is not yet substantial, which thus directly affects their academic success and institutional quality.

Alongside language literacy, many students also lack basic numerical, critical thinking, team-learning, and problem-solving skills, challenges that are arguably a reflection of the traditional, rote-learning-based K-12 education, despite efforts to improve teaching methods (OSullivan, 2016; Wilkins, 2010). While lecturers struggle with keeping quality in class with this fairly demanding student profile, they are also pressured with research demands without release time (O'Sullivan, 2015).

In addition, because they are offered short-term contracts, their commitment and engagement may be affected (Chapman, Austin, Farah, Wilson, & Ridge, 2014). If the teacher's role is essential in building nations as elaborated in Sahlberg (2012), referring to the renowned educational success story of Finland, policy-makers could consider issues that affect faculty morale and workload.

Non-federal HEIs have their own issues. First, many of them were drawn to make business in a wealthy country without substantial market research and ended up competing for a scarce number of students (Wilkins, 2010). Resonating with what is happening in other educational hubs such as China and Singapore (Altbach, 2010), the IBCs of the free zones that have a physical presence deliver a limited range of majors, of which running costs are low without offering a proper campus experience (Wilkins 2011). In order to cut costs further, in some cases, these HEIs tend to hire part-time faculty with no home campus affiliation, offer them little or no professional development, and in others, students experience frequent faculty turnover, a lack of resources, or not receiving some advertised modules (Wilkins, 2010). In addition, echoing Altbach's (2010) concern, relaxing admission standards as commercial institutions in a relatively small market is not uncommon, and once students are enrolled, faculty are pressured to satisfy the "customers" rather than learners (Wilkins, 2010), which sometimes leads to grade inflation (Gerson, 2010). Another issue that may have an impact on the quality in both federal and non-federal HEIs in the UAE is that the majority of the highest achievers prefer to study in top-tier universities in western countries instead (Wilkins, 2010).

In short, quality of education is influenced by the learner identity of the recruited students, which has a circular effect on academic performance (Bunce, Baird, & Jones, 2017), as well as teachers' profile and status. The ways in which both federal segregated and non-federal co-educational HEIs choose to confront these issues have an ultimate impact on the quality of the education that they provide.

7.2.4 National Vision Versus Student Profile

The UAE Vision 2021, which was launched in 2010 to coincide with the golden jubilee of the union of the emirates, envisages, "the UAE among the best countries in the world" by 2021. In order to realize this aim, the country prioritized six focus areas, two of which are a First-Rate Education system and a Competitive Knowledge Economy (UAE Vision, 2018). The vision highlights the need to transform the education system and teaching methods to support coming generations to become creative, ambitious, and responsible and to equip them with such skills as entrepreneurship and leadership, as well as a stronger foundation in Arabic language, science, and innovation.

One needs to be reminded that even though the expatriate population in the UAE exceeds the national population by 90%, they are essentially considered as "guests" or "social citizens" because judicial citizenship is only a rare occasion granted by rulers (Wang, 2015). Hence, it is not unusual for the UAE government to aim at sustaining its remarkable economic growth and attaining its future goal to establish itself as a global actor in the knowledge-driven world with its own youth. However, there exists an incongruity between the intentions of the country and the skills and professional orientation of the nationals (e.g., Ashour & Fatima, 2016; O'Sullivan, 2016). For example, as reported in O'Sullivan (2016), the scores of 15-year-old UAE nationals in reading, science, and mathematics in international tests are significantly lower than their counterparts. Further, nearly 80% of Emirati HE students enrol in majors in social sciences, humanities, and business programs (O'Sullivan, 2016). Bearing in mind that building a knowledge-based economy necessitates innovation, research, and scientific thinking, one can predict that most Emirati nationals will not be able to make contributions by 2021.

Not only the academic orientations of Emirati students, but also career choices indicate a lack of readiness to meet the challenges of a knowledge economy for several reasons. First, Emiratis tend to prefer employment in the public sector because such jobs offer almost guaranteed employment, higher salaries, better working hours, and more incentives than jobs in the private sector (O'Sullivan, 2016; Wilkins, 2010). The articulation of the Vision 2021 also suggests that the UAE government is aware of Emirati employees' lack of skills, experience, and commitment to work, echoing Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner's (2014) study on the perceptions of international CEOs/managers including Emiratis. In line with the nationalization of the workforce policy, the UAE has targeted an increase in the number of Emirati citizens in the private sector by 5% (QAA, 2017), which seems to be a solution only on paper. Emiratization, a form of positive discrimination imposed by a government policy to increase the number of nationals in workplaces, has had mixed outcomes. Some studies support the policy as a solution for the double-digit unemployment rate of Emirati post-secondary graduates (Daleure, 2016), whereas others argue that it has created job dissatisfaction and stressful workplace environments both for expatriate employees and Emiratis (Alabdelkarim, Muftah, & Hodgson, 2014), who are promoted to higher paid roles without proper qualifications (Kirk, 2010).

Exceptional Emirati students and employees do exist, yet recent studies corroborate the notion that skills such as being an effective team member, independent learning, data-informed problem-solving, as well as flexibility of Emirati employees should be cultivated and the level of individual motivation needed in today's competitive workplace environments should be increased (O'Sullivan 2016). It is interesting to see that the educational changes do not happen as quickly as infrastructural changes, as similar topics were highlighted in Fox's (2007) study nearly ten years before O'Sullivan's.

7.2.5 Cultural and Social Factors

The final complexity highlighted in this chapter can be summarized as "UAE society may be leaping forward into a new era, yet it remains faithful to its cultural traditions, which are deeply intertwined with Islamic beliefs and practices." (Wang & Kassam, 2016, p. 77). In this context, the focus will be given to the issues that might have a direct or indirect impact on quality in HEIs, such as Western educational norms, native Arabic and English languages, gender issues, and how traditions and religion influence career choice.

The foundation of UAE's education system was based on modern Western norms delivered by predominantly Western and/or Western-trained teachers, "…who teach and present information from a predominantly Eurocentric, English-language base" (Kirk, 2010, p. 26). Conversely, in line with Islamic principles, federally funded schools mandate segregated education, inclusion of religious and Arabic heritage studies, as well as deliberate content elimination "… from the UAE Government curriculum, namely political studies, evolution, and all topics that relate to sexuality" (Godwin, 2006, p. 8). Federal HEIs are also designed as gender-segregated campuses for undergraduate students who meet professors, administrators, or other employees from both genders. To provide an educational perspective, Diallo (2014) argues that, philosophically and epistemologically, western pedagogies, whereby learner autonomy, fact-finding, multiple interpretations, and rational and critical thinking are encouraged, are essentially not fully supported by the Islamic framework of thinking. To illustrate, Diallo quotes Halstead, who notes that:

> [K]nowledge must be approached reverently and in humility, for there cannot be any 'true' knowledge that is in conflict with religion and divine revelation, only ignorance [... because] the appropriate use of knowledge from a Muslim perspective is to help people to acknowledge God, to live in accordance with Islamic law and to fulfil the purposes of God's creation. (2004, p. 520).

Similarly, Wilkins (2010, citing Romani, 2009) states that the conservative landscape prevents researchers from producing high quality and internationally recognized research that explores culturally or socially "taboo" areas.

Islam, traditional values, and the Arabic language are considered sacred issues in the UAE. For example, while arguing the power of the indigenous language which carries symbolic and spiritual value, Al-Issa argues that "Arabic is above all the language associated with Islamic beliefs (the language of the Qur'an) and Arab identity" (2017, p. 125). On the other hand, Hopkyns (2016, citing Randall & Samimi, 2010) explains how English is essentially the *lingua franca* in the UAE. Not only as a part of the everyday life in a country where the international population is high, but in the HEIs as well, where it is the medium of instruction where most instructors are Western and/or Western-trained (Diallo, 2014). Some studies suggest that students hold on to their traditional values, despite being educated via British curricula in western educational settings that are equipped with cutting-edge educational technology and with exposure to social media (Wang & Kassam, 2016). Perhaps, using Wang and Kassam words, the UAE has created an "indigenous form of modernity" (p. 91).

Nonetheless, the tension and a sense of fear that westernization and "Englishization" cause between the conservative values and high-speed modernization do exist. For example, Al-Issa's (2017) study emphasizes how Arabic, the indigenous language of the nationals and the official language of the UAE, is marginalized in EMI settings. Findlow posits that since gaining independence in 1971, the UAE has experienced feelings that are "inward-looking in contemplation of the term 'indigenous', and outward-looking in the sense of dramatically extending the range of supra-national networks" (2005, p. 287). Findlow also suggests that HE reflects a global-local dichotomy while imitating Western values on the one hand and resisting to them on the other. Findlow's argument, thus, makes sense when one considers that Western consultancy has been sought while making policies to reach international standards and implementing procedures to improve the English proficiency of learners with mostly Western faculty members in EMI settings, but at the same time there are opponents of these policies who argue that dominance of the English language and Western influences may lead the country toward becoming "a clone of the West and consequently lose its culture" (Wang & Kassam, 2016, p. 75). Resonating with this concern, Solloway (2016) posits that English is not only seen as a potential threat to the cultural integrity in the UAE, but also to its religion, Islam, and concludes that while Emirati students appreciate the fact that English proficiency is necessary in the current economic and social climate of their country, their preference of medium for their academic studies would be Arabic, but they find themselves in the situation of a "choiceless choice" (Troudi & Jendli, 2011, cited by Solloway, 2016, p. 191).

Similarly, when the values and goals of HEIs are reviewed, one notices how several aspects of Western values such as research, creativity, qualitative and quantitative thinking, and team-learning are highlighted. However, as Tezcan-Unal (2018) noted, there may be situations when students cannot cope with the task requirements measuring their teamwork, creative thinking, and academic language proficiency, but continue to expect high grades as they were awarded in schools mostly thanks to rote-learning (O'Sullivan, 2016). In other words, conflict will invariably occur when the expectations of Western standards reflect Western values coupled with Western/Western-trained professors' professional ethics. This is especially true for students whose educational expectations are merely based on receiving certification (Ashour & Fatima, 2016) rather than for higher learning goals.

A different, relevant paradox is that of females in higher education and the workforce. Female participation in HEIs is 77%, the highest in the world, despite the fact that their participation in the workforce (mainly in the public sector) is still low with 25% (Wang & Kassam, 2016). The mismatch between the pursuit of higher education pursuit and employment for females, as well as their choice of majors, is probably affected by the traditional roles and values, i.e., prioritizing family and traditions. For example, most female students tend not to choose majors in science, technology, and engineering (STE) for two primary reasons: The UAE is a "family-based patriarchal society with clearly defined gender roles" and, "the unavailability of university STE [Science, Technology, Engineering] programmes in reasonable distance to students' residence" (Aswad, Vidican & Samulewicz, 2011, p. 561).

Meanwhile, their male counterparts tend to drop out of schooling as a whole, as early as age 16, and join the army or police force, lured by high salaries (O'Sullivan, 2016), most likely in an effort to pursue their traditional role as providers (Wang & Kassam, 2016).

Arguably, complexities explained in this section stem from multiple factors, such as rapid changes and the push from the government to establish a globally recognized knowledge economy, the desire for a high-quality education system prioritizing English in the educational environments as an international language, and the possible resistance to maintaining traditional values and cultural norms. This dilemma sometimes causes concerns in educational settings, reflected by the career choices of genders, their attitudes towards English, as well as their competencies in EMI settings.

Thus far, this chapter has attempted to summarize five current contextual complexities in the UAE that may have direct or indirect impact on the quality of higher education graduates, bearing in mind the strategic economic and social goals articulated in UAE Vision 2021. The following section will present recommendations to facilitate the transition from the UAE's current state, which seems to be some distance from the desired one, to the espoused state of building and sustaining a strong, diversified, knowledge-based economy with a national workforce.

7.3 Recommendations

7.3.1 Resolving the Workforce Imbalance

It is fairly clear that the population of the UAE's nationals will not increase rapidly, nor its dependency on qualified expatriate workforce decrease, considering the ambitious economic goals articulated in UAE Vision 2021. Possibility for the expatriate workforce to become citizens after a certain amount of time is not an option in the UAE. Considering the costs of residency, work permits, and other benefits for 90% of the workforce in the country, and their tendency to make investment and/or transfer their salaries to their families in their own countries (Daleure, 2016), policymakers may consider developing schemes to offer naturalizing opportunities for exceptional non-nationals (including international academics working in HEIs) in order to increase the number of qualified citizens, to cut additional recruiting costs, and to encourage them to contribute to the local economy. The application criteria could involve academic success in the fields of STE, extraordinary contributions to enhance the knowledge-driven economy with research and innovative activities, as well as certain cultural and social standards such as being bi-literate in Arabic and English and being a practicing Muslim in order to show respect for national cultural sensitivities. Eligible individuals could be given an "indefinite leave to remain" and/or "permanent residency" for a certain period of time as in the United Kingdom (see for example British Citizenship, n.d.) before full citizenship. As in several western

countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany, another idea could be offering full scholarships for exceptionally bright foreign students with scientific and innovative aptitude to study in federal HEIs in order to increase the quality of research and create a competitive but collaborative international environment. Depending on their sustained contributions to the UAE's goals, these bright individuals could also be naturalized.

7.3.2 Focusing on Quality Development and Enhancement

As a country that houses nearly 100 HEIs, the UAE's efforts to ensure HE providers fitness for purpose are essential and commendable, yet measures need to be taken to synchronize various QA schemes (Ashour, 2017), which are reportedly overwhelming, time-consuming, and confusing. Supporting university leadership in establishing an internal quality culture based on quality development and enhancement (Ashour, 2017; Elassy, 2015) that relies on data-informed decisions, professional and reflective debates as a result of multiple action-research cycles in small communities of practice as in learning organizations (Tezcan-Unal, 2018) may generate sustained growth opportunities while ensuring accountability (Tezcan-Unal et al., 2019). A flexible approach toward the complacency of those universities and/or programs that have already undergone international accreditation from reputable accreditation agencies would also be another option to reduce the duplication of work.

7.3.3 Educating Nationals for National Goals

In order to abandon its status of "consumer" educational practice (Kirk, 2010) from the Western countries, the UAE needs to create its own teaching workforce from K-12 to higher education, mirroring the internationally acclaimed Finnish educational model, which embraces the crucial role of highly trained teachers in nation-building (Sahlberg, 2012). The formal policy, which targets an increase in the number of government teachers to 90% by 2020 (Kirk, 2010), is unlikely to be attained probably because the number of graduates from teaching colleges has not reached a level of demographic significance (Kirk, 2010). However, more importantly than quantity, professional development of these teachers to provide the quality education based on inquiry that a knowledge-based economy requires needs to be the focus of attention, accepting the fact that it will be a long and evolutionary process (see Dede, 2006).

To meet the expectations of the knowledge-based economy, fields of scientific research and innovation should take precedence. Since encouraging STEM education is not only an issue for the UAE, policy-makers could analyse and adapt to the national curricula successful models that have been applied in other countries. For

example, starting from early ages, students could be encouraged to take part in problem-solving and inquiry-based pedagogies, while integrating STEM in the curriculum as in the Finnish model (Su, Ledbetter, & Ferguson, 2017).

Another possibility is to encourage the majority of the HE students, particularly females, to pursue STEM fields. Aswad et al.'s (2011) study conducted in the UAE suggests that if lack of awareness by students and parents of what is expected in STEM-related fields is addressed, if student interests are stimulated prior to choosing majors, if visibility and accessibility of STEM related fields increase, then stereotypes associated with STEM related career pathways, such as "masculine", "nerdiness" and "difficult" may be overcome, and these areas become more socially and culturally approved. It is hard to argue against Aswad et al.'s comment:

> In an era where a country's competitive edge relies more than ever on technological innovation, a low supply of national high-calibre STE graduates is a barrier in the economic transition process and makes it more difficult for both the government and private firms to find and employ local talent (2011, p. 560).

7.3.4 Developing Employability Skills of Graduates

Today's workplaces expect employers to possess not only technical but also so-called soft-skills "such as communication, social skills, positive attitude, professionalism, flexibility, teamwork, and work ethics" (Robles, 2012, cited in Tezcan-Unal, 2016, p. 45). Referring to Wilkins's (2011) comment on the quality assessment of university's output being based on placement of graduates in the labor market, measures should be taken to support student employability skills, combined with subject-specific expertize in the HEIs. One possible initiative could be the program described by El-Temtamy, O'Neill, and Midraj (2016). Discussing the value of broader skills and experiential learning for workplace readiness, the scholars highlighted the effectiveness of the program "that offers undergraduate students opportunities (e.g., internships, work placements, role-play) to develop skills (e.g., communication, relationship management), and traits (e.g., reliability, professionalism) that have been found to enhance post-graduate employment" (p. 111). Funding programs for undergraduate students even before their internship stages may help them to strengthen their workplace readiness.

7.3.5 Supporting Academics Teaching English Language Learners in EMI Settings

The apprehension concerning English hegemony was mentioned in the context above. However, it is important to remember that "English is the premier language of business and the professions and the only global language of science, research, and academic publication" (Marginson, 2010, p. 6973). Thus, it is essential to

accept the role of English in the HEIs while providing substantial support to the students, as well as the academics, who are not necessarily trained to teach content in EMI settings to english language learners (ELLs). Research on the effects of the medium lecturers use for instruction indicates that student learning is influenced by the pronunciation of key terminology, comprehension of concepts, and sometimes lack of visuals that support instruction (see Hellekjær, 2010). As revealed in the study conducted by Dearden, Macaro, and Akincioglu (2016) in the Turkish HE context, lecturers might benefit from collaborative lesson planning activities with English language specialists, who are more competent with understanding learners' linguistic capacity. Jacob's (2007) study reports that conversations between the language specialists whose field-specific discourse questions raised the content specialists' awareness of the students' academic literacy challenges allowed both parties to appreciate the language as a means to convey meaning for specific purposes in the context.

Thus, a way forward in the UAE may be establishing partnerships between lecturers and language specialists and/or investing in faculty development programs focusing on overcoming the common challenges in EMI settings (e.g., Humphrey, 2017; Lavelle, 2016) such as adapting course content in accordance with field-specific genres and registers and creating an academic and language-rich discourse designed specifically for the course and program learning objectives. This approach would significantly improve the quality of work, rather than relying on a few credit bearing "language support" type courses, because reaching the learning goals of a baccalaureate degree through the medium of a second language that is understood at a lower than the recommended level of proficiency would naturally have a detrimental influence on educational quality.

7.3.6 Allowing Time for Educational Change

Marginson (2010) concludes that capacity and meta-strategy are the two major factors that affect nations' and institutions' global strategies, stating that one of two assumed elements of capacity is "the inherited educational traditions, language and culture" (p. 6972). The main cause of current concerns seems to be the rapid change undertaken in the UAE in a short space of time which has essentially been regulated and frequently updated by the state (O'Sullivan, 2016), considering the educational and cultural background of the nation mentioned in the preceding section. The more educated the parents are, the more value they attribute to their children's pursuit of higher quality education (Dede, 2006). Slowly but surely, future generations in the UAE will be more fortunate than the previous ones.

When one reviews the Ministry of Education Strategic Plan 2017–2021 (Ministry of Education, 2019), one notices that the government has set ambitious educational goals to prepare students for the knowledge economy, such as becoming one of the top 20 countries on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), reducing the enrollment rate in tertiary language foundation programs to 0% by

applying modern language methods as revealed in the K-12 English as an International Language framework (National Unified K-12 Learning Standards Framework, 2014), and even by eliminating foundation year programs (Salem & Swan, 2014). Using an analogy from biology, Dede (2006) posits the establishment of educational changes as an evolutionary 'scaling-up' process, as they will need to pass iterative stages such as design, dealing with resistance to change, and contextual adaptation before they become institutionalized. Top-down decisions may initiate major policy implementations and may have some motivational impact (Kirk, 2014); however, rather than implementing frequent reactional changes, allowing time seems to be necessary for newly imposed educational traditions to become "inherited".

7.4 Conclusion

The UAE's economic and infrastructural achievements since 1971 are unquestionably remarkable. Providing high-quality education has always been a primary concern of the UAE government. The efforts are reflected by the generous budget allocated to education by the current government (Zacharias & Saadi, 2018) and the detailed principles and efforts in government websites such as Quality Education (2019). However, as a country that is determined to be a globally competitive actor and sustain its growth, the UAE needs to focus on the quality development and enhancement of HEIs. Financial strengths of a country undoubtedly afford technologically advanced infrastructures, recruiting highly educated international faculty with competitive employment packages, and lower lecturer-student ratios, which are important when it comes to the ranking of HEIs (QS, Methodology, 2019). However, while allocating a substantial amount of money definitely helps, it may not suffice in solving matters of quality without delving deeper into educational, cultural, and social issues. This chapter summarized five major interconnected complexities that require deeper philosophical reformation when dealing with HE quality matters in the UAE for the policy-makers to take into consideration while preparing for ambitious national goals.

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Chapter 8
Bridging the Quality Gap in English Language Education Between Post-secondary Education and Public Schools in Qatar

Khalid Elhassan and Ahmad Fawzi Kabaha

Abstract This chapter investigates the disparity between the outcomes of public schools in Qatar and the admission requirements for post-secondary education in Qatar. It examines the initiatives developed in the country to bridge the gap, namely, the *Academic Bridge Program* sponsored by Qatar Foundation (QF), *Teaching English Program* at Qatar Community College (QCC), *College of North Atlantic College-Qatar (CNA-Q) Access Program*, *Foundation Program* at Qatar University (QU), and newly established *University Foundation College* in affiliation with the Northern Consortium of UK Universities (NCUK). These provisions aim to improve the levels of students in English Language, Math, Science, and core skills, which are deemed necessary for a smooth transition to tertiary education. Though this is an immediate remedy to skills gap, there are growing calls for radical reforms in public education to ensure that students are ready to begin post-secondary education by the time they leave schools.

8.1 Introduction

The issue of college readiness is increasingly becoming a dominant theme in educational institutions and government agencies. David Conley (2010) argues that students should leave high school with the knowledge and skills required to enroll in a college or embark on a career. This view has triggered a systematic paradigm shift in the focus of formal education. There is now an expectation that formal learning opportunities beyond high school should be provided to students in preparation for college enrolment and careers (Conley, 2010).

College readiness is defined as the level of preparation a student needs to succeed without remediation in credit-bearing coursework at the post-compulsory education

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_8

level (Conley, 2007). Though there are different tools which can be used to determine whether a student is college- or work-ready, such as high school grade point average and standardized test scores, they are not absolute indicators of college and work preparedness since high school graduation requirements are not tightly aligned with college curricula and expectations. Such misalignment is evident in the number of bridging/foundation/remedial programs provided to high school graduates when they enroll in post-secondary institutions. In fact, college readiness (or the lack of it) can be measured by the number of bridging/foundation/remedial programs and the number of students enrolled on these programs. The reality is that the number of such programs and the number of students enrolled on them are increasing not only in Qatar, but also elsewhere.

Countries have different schemes to address this issue. The main focus of policymakers is to reduce the number of bridging/foundation/remedial programs and the number of students enrolled in them by working closely with schools to align their curricula with the expectations of post-secondary education and work. In fact, this issue is more difficult than it appears. Determining what students should know and the skills they should develop to succeed in post-secondary education and career is quite complex. Conley's college readiness model consists of four interactional components that students should possess to succeed in college and career: key cognitive strategies, key content, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and awareness (Conley, 2010).

Key cognitive strategies include problem solving, interpretation, precision, and accuracy. These skills are essential for transition to post-secondary education and can be developed over time. Key content includes those areas in which students need to be versed at as they constitute the foundation for understanding any academic discipline. Examples of these include a strong foundation in English, Math, and Science. Conversely, examples of academic behaviors necessary for transition and progression in post-secondary education are study skills and taking responsibility for learning. Contextual skills and awareness include knowledge and familiarity with the post-secondary education environment, namely, admission requirements, calendars, financial aid, expectations, and so on (Conley, 2010).

Like a growing number of countries, Qatar has an issue with the level of readiness of high school graduates for post-secondary education and careers. In other words, there exists an apparent gap between admission requirements for post-secondary education and the outcomes of high schools in the country. This gap is evident in the number of bridging/foundation/remedial programs and the sheer number of students attending these programs. Though all existing programs in essence function separately, they all primarily focus on providing intensive English language tuition for students. They also provide essential Math and Science skills. Study skills alongside essential transformational skills are also embedded in these pre-university schemes.

That said, this chapter will investigate the disparity between the quality of the graduates of high schools in Qatar and the expectations and admission requirements of post-secondary education. Though the main focus of the chapter will be English language tuition, it should be viewed within the context of quality assurance and

reforms in education. The chapter begins by diagnosing the gap in knowledge, skills, and competencies, which is a key characteristic of high school leavers in Qatar. It then dwells on the initiatives developed across the country to remedy this imbalance and bridge the gap. These initiatives include the Academic Bridge Program sponsored by the Qatar Foundation (QF), the Teaching English Program at the Community College Qatar (CCQ), the College of the North Atlantic College-Qatar (CNA-Q) Access Program, the Foundation Program at Qatar University (QU), as well as the newly established University Foundation College in affiliation with the Northern Consortium of UK Universities (NCUK).

Generally speaking, the primary function of the remedial initiatives is to prepare students for entry to universities in Qatar and abroad. They are designed for students who want to embark on undergraduate study, but lack the essential academic or English requirements which warrant direct entry to post-secondary education. Most of these programs can be completed in less than a year and they provide the fastest route to secure admission to post-secondary education.

8.2 The Qatar Education System

Realizing that the nation's greatest natural resource is its people, Qatar regards education as a top national priority. The Qatar National Vision 2030 rests on the fundamental goal of building a knowledge-based economy, where education is the key for developing a sustainable society and unlocking human potential. Therefore, a substantial amount of time, energy, and resources has been allocated to education so as to build "a modern world-class educational system that provides students with a first-rate education, comparable to that offered anywhere in the world" (GSDP, 2008)

8.2.1 General Education

The school system in Qatar consists of five levels: Preschool (3–5), primary (grades 1–6), preparatory (grades 7–9), secondary (grades 10–12), and higher education. The K-12 education covers the first four levels, and only 6 years of primary schooling followed by 3 years at the preparatory stage are compulsory.

Preschool education is mainly run by the private sector. The National Development Strategy 2011–2016 envisaged mandatory kindergarten attendance for Qatari children from the age of 3. The duration of primary education is 6 years and the admission age is normally 6. Upon completion of this stage, pupils enroll in the preparatory stage that lasts for 3 years. After completion of general preparatory education, students can proceed to a general, commercial, or technical secondary school. Secondary education also lasts for 3 years. Students completing secondary education and passing the final examination receive the general, technical, or commercial secondary certificate, depending on the stream chosen.

8.2.2 Higher Education

The higher education system in Qatar has its roots in the creation of QU, which was founded in 1973. As a government university and one of the leading universities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, it started education in 1977 with four colleges, and today, is offering more than 70 undergraduate specializations and 45 graduate programs, in both Arabic and English. As of 2015, QU had an alumni body of over 30,000 graduates and a student body of over 14,000 undergraduates.

In 1995, with the goal of becoming a "leading center for research and development excellence and innovation", QF was established to support education, science, and community development. The strategic goal of QF is to support Qatar in its journey from a carbon economy to a knowledge-based economy and to become "a major force in scientific discovery and technology discovery and in the translation of knowledge into innovative applications" (Citation needed). To do so, QF has established the Education City. A flagship initiative of QF, Education City is a 3300-acre state-of-the-art campus that hosts branch campuses of some of the world's leading educational institutes, including six American universities, one British university and one French university, along with a homegrown university, and other research and scholastic centers. Other than these international universities, QF launched an emerging graduate-level research university, called Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU), in 2013, as the second public university in the country. HBKU offers postgraduate studies in the fields of science, engineering, technology, humanities, social science, public health, and business, both at M.Sc. and Ph.D. levels with few undergraduate programs. Afterward, in 2015, a third government university, the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI) was established, as a graduate-level research university. Unlike HBKU, DI focuses on postgraduate studies specifically in the fields of social science, humanities, public administration, and development economics.

In addition, there are five international universities having branch campuses in the country. These are the Stenden Qatar University of Applied Sciences, College of the North Atlantic, the University of Calgary, the University of Aberdeen, and University of Northumbria. Stenden University was established in 2000, offering bachelor and master programs in hospitality and tourism education; specifically in international business and management, tourism management, and international hotel management. Subsequently, the College of the North Atlantic, a technical university, opened in 2002, offering a Canadian curriculum in the fields of business, engineering technology, health, information technology, language, banking, and financial studies. The University of Calgary, established in 2007, offers bachelor and master programs primarily in nursing education. Opening its undergraduate programs in September 2017, the University of Aberdeen is the first UK University to operate on a dedicated campus in Qatar; it offers undergraduate programs in Accounting and Finance and Business Management and two postgraduate degrees. Northumbria University, in partnership with Qatar Finance and Business Academy (QFBA), offers undergraduate programs in Accounting, Finance, and International

Banking. QCC, established in 2010, provides a range of academic and technical programs in Arts, Science, and Applied Sciences.

8.3 Education Reforms in Qatar

Published in 2008, Qatar National Vision 2030 represents the government policy agenda aiming at transforming Qatar into an advanced country. One of its tenets is economic progress, part of which is human capital development. The Human Development Index (HDI) for Qatar rose by 0.64% annually and is now recorded at 0.86%, which gives Qatar a rank of 37 out of 182 countries. The literacy rate of the country rose from 80.8% in 2004 to 98.4% in 2015. The current enrollment in primary, secondary, and tertiary education is at 71%. Spending on education as a share of GDP is 3.6%. These figures not only reflect the recognition of Qatar's policymakers that education is a key factor in societal progress, but also that growth and development are the results of a long process.

The education reform, known as *Education for a New Era,* was initiated in 2002 to address the management and delivery of educational services, the curriculum, the quality of teachers, and the availability of pertinent resources. Qatar's public education reform initiative believes a modern education system meeting the highest international standards will transform the country. It will enable Qatar to grow into a more developed and open society, befitting its diversity.

The initiative's educational philosophy puts the student at the center of the educational process and recognizes that education must recognize student differences in order to meet their individual educational needs.

As a result of the K-12 reform, Qatar's children are now in learner-centered classrooms within improved facilities, where better-prepared and better-trained teachers guide them in accordance with internationally benchmarked standards. QF was established in 1995 as an initiative to reform the country's higher education arts and sciences program. Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development, a private nonprofit organization, established Education City in 2003.

The City was established to build a knowledge-based economy, to produce a pool of well-trained graduates and lifelong learners, and ultimately to make Qatar not only a hub for education in the region, but also a knowledge-producing country with an economical sustainable system and a diversified economy. The City's main objective is to build links between research and industry, academia, and enterprise, all of which would contribute to bridging research and policy in the country and the region.

In addition, through Qatar Science and Technology Park's (QSTP) alignment with the branch universities and the Foundation's corporate-level approach to large companies such as GE, Rolls Royce, and Vodafone, a commercialized research is generated according to a corporate manager; this leads to economic development and more job opportunities. All of this was to be accomplished by bringing in several highly regarded, primarily US, universities. The City also includes Qatar

Academy, The Learning Center, and Academic Bridge Program as well as QSTP, Sidra Medical, and Research Center. A teaching hospital associated with Weill Cornell Medical College is being established. All these schools have full autonomy in terms of their staffing procedures, admissions requirements, and curricula. The degrees that are awarded at these universities are equivalent to those granted by the main campuses. There is no interference on the part of the Foundation in the curriculum or the school structure and organization.

8.4 Qatar's Global Education Initiatives

8.4.1 Education Above All

Education Above All (EAA) is a foundation founded in 2012 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. Its aim is to build a global movement that contributes to human, social, and economic development through the provision of quality education. It has a particular focus on those affected by poverty, conflict, and disaster; it champions the needs of children, youth, and women to empower them to become active members of their communities. The mission of the initiative is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for vulnerable and marginalized people, particularly in the developing world, as an enabler of human development. Its projects span primary education, access and enrolment, higher education, and wider concerns such as the health, well-being, and basic rights. During the first 6 months of operation, 600,000 out-of-school children were reached, and today, they have commitments to enroll 10.4 million such children.

8.4.2 World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE)

Established in 2009 by the QF leadership, the World Innovation Summit (WISE) is an international, multi-sectoral platform for creative thinking, debate, and purposeful action. WISE has established itself as a global reference in new approaches to education. Through both the biennial Summit and a range of ongoing programs, WISE is promoting innovation and building the future of education through collaboration.

WISE is a response to the necessity of revitalizing education and providing a global platform for the development of new ideas and solutions. Since 2009, WISE has evolved into a thriving global, multi-sectoral community, which continues to generate fruitful dialogue and productive partnerships. The WISE community is a network of education stakeholders—from students to decision-makers—from about 200 countries who share ideas and collaborate to seek creative solutions to solve challenges facing education.

8.4.3 Educate a Child Initiative

Launched in November 2012, by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Educate A Child (EAC) is a global program of the Education Above All Foundation (EAA) that aims to significantly reduce the number of children worldwide who are denied their right to education.

EAC is, at its heart, a commitment to children who are out of school to help provide them with opportunities to learn, and as such, it contributes to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4: To ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. EAC has a vision of a world where every individual has the opportunity to learn through a quality education.

EAC works with partner organizations to trigger significant breakthroughs in providing out-of-school children faced with extreme poverty, cultural barriers, and conflict-affected environments an opportunity for a full course of quality primary education.

EAC endeavors to:

- Influence the enrolment and retention of at least ten million out-of-school children.
- Support the development of education quality so that children who attend school stay in school and have an opportunity to learn.
- Contribute to mobilizing US $1 billion to support education and develop innovative financing mechanisms to foster program sustainability.
- Keep the issue of out-of-school children at the top of global and national agendas.

8.4.4 Qatar National Research Fund

The Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF) is a governmental funding body that supports original, competitively selected research by both local and international researchers for projects which fit with Qatar's national research strategy and that incorporate a Qatar-based partner. QNRF was established in 2006 to advance knowledge and education by acting as a support system for researchers. It is a center within the Research & Development establishment at QF.

Over the first 6 years, QNRF has funded over 700 projects under its flagship funding program, the National Research Priorities Program (NPRP), amounting to more than US $600 million in grants, with the total number of recipients hailing from more than 60 countries.

8.5 English Support Programs in Qatar

8.5.1 The Academic Bridge Program

The Academic Bridge Program (ABP) was established in 2001 under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser. Located inside Qatar Foundation's Education City, the ABP is located in close proximity to some of Qatar's most prominent universities. It follows an American curriculum, in which teaching is delivered exclusively in English and is fully accredited by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) in the US. As such, it is a modular program at foundation and advanced academic studies level delivered to high school leavers to prepare them for tertiary study both in Qatar and abroad.

The duration of the ABP is for a single year consisting of two semesters. Throughout their time in the ABP, students study four major disciplines in breadth and depth: English, math, science, and computer applications. Considerable emphasis is placed on essential academic skills, interpersonal skills, time-management skills, and academic integrity. Academic support, coupled with counseling and personal support, is widely available to be accessed by students.

8.5.1.1 Admission and Eligibility Criteria

The ABP offers admission in the Fall and Spring of each year. To be considered for admission, students must complete high school with an average of 75% for Fall admission or 80% for Spring admission. In addition, students must have a minimum overall IELTS score of 4.5 for Fall admission and 5.0 for Spring admission. TOEFL scores are also accepted with minimum requirements of 53 for Fall and 61 for Spring. All tests should be completed within the previous 2 years. In addition, placement tests are given in English, math, and computer skills to all admitted students. A writing sample is also obtained together with the ACCUPLACER test to determine the distribution of students in three different levels.

Although the majority of admitted students are Qatari (>80%), admission is also offered to students of other nationalities. In previous years, the majority of admitted students were Qatari independent school leavers; however, this trend has changed in recent years to an almost even number of admitted students from independent and international schools alike. When comparing progression and achievement, there seems to be no difference between students coming from independent schools and those coming from international schools.

8.5.1.2 Impact

During their study on the ABP, students hone their academic and interpersonal skills that qualify them to apply to universities in Qatar and around the world. Students flourish in a very supportive environment that sets high expectations and endeavors

to fulfill them, while ensuring that students develop and progress. Over 90% of the students are accepted into universities in Qatar, Europe, the United States, and Canada. Out of those accepted, greater than 53% are accepted into universities in the Education City.

8.5.2 The English Language Center at the Community College of Qatar

The English Language Center (ELC) provides the foundation English program in the Community College of Qatar (CCQ). The program is designed to bridge the academic and skills gap in high school graduates and prepare them for entry into all academic programs at the college. It consists of four levels aligned with the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR). Furthermore, it implements an integrated approach in teaching the four fundamental skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The duration of each level is 8 weeks, during which the program delivers a holistic approach that is designed to teach personal skills such as time management, communication, teamwork, and study skills to prepare students for enrollment onto English and Arabic academic programs at the College.

The ELC program, which is considerably more affordable than other similar programs in the country, was designed in line with CCQ's mission of meeting the educational and labor market needs in Qatar. All ELC students are Qatari. Their ages are different from students attending counterpart programs elsewhere, as the majority of the students are already in full-time employment. The average age of enrolled students is 28 for males and 26 for females.

8.5.2.1 Admission

The ELC foundation program consists of four levels, with level 1 being the lowest and level 4 being the highest. The requirements for level 1 are an ACCUPLACER score ranging from 150 to 225 and overall IELTS score of less than 4.0. However, there is a number of students who seek admission to the foundation program, but who are unable to meet level 1 requirements. To meet this need, the ELC created a bridge level to help these students achieve the admission requirements for level 1. The bridge level accepts students with an ACCUPLACER score ranging from 110 to 149 and does not require an IELTS score. Level two requirements are an ACCUPLACER score ranging from 226 to 268 and an overall IELTS score of 4.0. After completing level 2, students typically meet the admission requirement for the Arabic track programs; therefore, they have the option of continuing their study in the foundation program and moving to level 3, or opting out to seek admission onto an academic program in the Arabic track.

Table 8.1 Foundation program levels at CCQ

Level\score	Bridging course	ELC level 1	ELC level 2	ELC level 3 (College Level-Arabic Track)	ELC level 4
ACCUPLACER score	110–149	150–225	226–268	269–316	317–399
IELTS score	NA	<4.0	4.0	4.5	5.0
CEFR	A1.1	A1.2	A2	B1.1	B1.2

Despite the reduction in teaching English in independent schools, college students are still required to have a basic command of the English language. This holds true even for students who choose to pursue the Arabic track, as evidenced by requiring an overall IELTS score of 4.5 for admission. If students choose to continue with the foundation program, they must meet the level 3 requirement of an ACCUPLACER score ranging from 269 to 316 and an overall IELTS score of 4.5. Level 4, the last and highest level, requires an ACCUPLACER score ranging from 317 to 399 and an overall IELTS score of 5.0 (Table 8.1).

8.5.2.2 Course Elements and Objectives

The ELC foundation program delivers intensive English language courses over a period of 8 weeks per each level; there are four levels in the program. Each level consists of 20 weekly hours of classroom instruction and 4 h of project work in the Student Learning Center. Instruction is delivered face to face with an asynchronous online component. In order for students to progress from one level to the next, they must score an average of at least 70%.

The objectives of each level become progressively more challenging, and students' command of English improves as they advance through the levels. For example, a student completing level 1 is expected to "extract information from a simple text," while a student completing level 2 is expected to "identify main ideas, key details, sequence of events, and key information in a simple spoken text." The skills continue to progress in the higher levels to "make inferences and identify key information in clear standard speech" in level 3 and, in level 4, "identify key information (topic and main idea) and relationships between ideas delivered in clear standard speech."

Contrary to other existing programs, staff at ELC reported differences in student progression between students hailing from international schools and students coming from independent schools. Students from international schools, where English is more heavily emphasized, progress faster than their counterparts from independent schools, where English is taught as a stand-alone subject.

Table 8.2 Success rates at ELC in CCQ

Level	Term 1, %	Term 2, %	Term 3, %	Term 4, %
1	75	68	78	N/A
2	82	87	91	N/A
3	79	73	73	N/A
4	88	92	91	N/A

8.5.2.3 Success Rates

Students typically progress successfully between the levels. Success rates are shown in Table 8.2. Students who do not pass a level are offered the opportunity to repeat it up to two times. Approximately, 15% of the enrolled students are not able to continue in the foundation program.

8.5.3 College of the North Atlantic College Qatar (CNA-Q) Access Program

The College helps students meet the requirements to enter or complete their program of choice by offering foundation English, Mathematics, and Science courses. The focus is on delivering high-quality, innovative, student-centered English language education, which enables learners to develop the necessary language competencies, study skills, and attitudes to succeed in their technical and academic pursuits. This is done in accordance to international standards for excellence, while responding to the needs of individual learners.

8.5.3.1 The Preparatory Programs

The Academic Preparatory Program (APP), which is benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference of Languages (CEFR), is delivered by the Language Studies Unit, which focuses on enabling learners to develop the necessary language competencies, study skills, and attitudes required to succeed in their technical and academic pursuits. The goals of the academic APP are as follows:

1. To prepare students to enter their academic programs
2. To improve overall English levels to a minimum of a B1.2 proficiency level
3. To reinforce students' success strategies related to independent learning, academic study, technology, and the workplace

On the other hand, the goals of the Technical Certificate Preparation Program (TCP), which is also benchmarked against the CEFR, are set below:

1. To prepare students to enter their technical programs
2. To improve overall English levels to a minimum of an A2.2 proficiency level
3. To reinforce student success strategies related to independent learning, academic study, technology, and the workplace.

8.5.3.2 Duration

The period from September to July consists of three semesters for APP: two 15-week semesters and one 10-week intersession. TCP has three 12-week semesters. Details of the progression routes for the two programs are illustrated below in Tables 8.3 and 8.4.

8.5.3.3 Entrance requirements

All students admitted to CNA-Q must complete an entrance examination to assess their proficiency in English and mathematics. For admission to the College, applicants should present a valid academic IELTS (overall band 5 with no individual band below 4.5).

Table 8.3 Progression routes in the APP at CNA-Q

Course name	CEFR descriptor	CEFR range	IELTS range
Program courses	–	>B1.2	5+
Academic English 3	Independent User-Vantage	B1.2–B1.2+	5+
Academic English 2	Independent User-Threshold	B1.1–B1.2	4.5–5
Academic English 1	Independent User-Threshold	A2.2–B1.1	4–4.5
English Foundation 3	Basic User-Waystage	A1.2–A2.2	N/A
English Foundation 2	Basic User-Breakthrough	A1.1–A1.2	N/A
English Foundation 1	Basic User-Breakthrough	<A1.1–A1.1	N/A
Accent English 1	Non-User-Beginner	A0–<A1.1	N/A

Table 8.4 Progression routes in the TCP at CNA-Q

Course name	CEFR descriptor	CEFR range	IELTS range
Technical English 3	Independent User-Threshold + focus on technical English	>A2.2	4+
Technical English 2			
Technical English 1			
Workplace Exposure	Basic User-Waystage	A1.2–A2.2	N/A
General English2			
General English 1	Basic User-Breakthrough	A1.1–A1.2	N/A

Students scoring above 50% on the placement Math exam may enroll directly in credit Math courses in their program of studies. Those who do not achieve a grade of 50% must complete preparatory Math courses aligned with their program of studies. Students who do not have the prerequisite science courses from secondary school, or received a grade below the admission criteria, may be enrolled in preparatory science courses. Students may also opt to take these courses if they studied science in Arabic in secondary school, as the preparatory courses focus on the language of science as well as concept development and application.

8.6 Foundation Program at Qatar University

The Foundation Program (FP) under the Deanship of General Studies is the first step in the learning journey for Science and English-track students at Qatar University (QU). The significance of this program stems from its role in the QU 2018–2022 Strategic Plan for Qatar to keep abreast of contemporary global changes as well as satisfy the needs of both the community and the labor market in Qatar.

The students at the FP receive tuition in both English and Mathematics over 1 academic year. This is to equip them with the needed skills to successfully complete their majors at QU. The FP courses are offered through an interactive and engaging learning environment, supplemented with student support initiatives to enrich the learning experience of students. Through innovative, research-based educational practices, the program aims to help students achieve academic readiness by stimulating their intellectual curiosity. As they develop their knowledge through study skills and critical thinking, students will integrate independent and collaborative learning with the appropriate use of information technology.

8.6.1 Foundation Program Courses

The FP seeks to improve students' skills in Mathematics and English before starting Science, Engineering, Pharmacy, Medicine, Education, and Business. The FP is a 1-year experience with a provision for completion in a maximum of 2 years. To pass the program, students must achieve a score of 70%.

8.6.2 The Foundation English Program

The 1-year Foundation English program is an intensive program which provides an active experience for students in small classes. It is divided into two parts: The Intensive English Program (elementary), which focuses on basic English language skills, and the Academic English Program (intermediate), which helps in preparing

students specifically for the colleges of Science, Engineering, Pharmacy, and Medicine. By completing and passing all level courses of the program, students can begin their undergraduate courses in English at QU without any additional exams. The Foundation Program Department of English is accredited by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation and upholds the CEA Standards for English Language Programs and Institutions.

8.6.3 Foundation Math Courses

There is one level that consists of one noncredit course, which is Elementary Algebra taught for 4 h per week.

8.6.4 Foundation Program Placement

One of the most important FP requirements is the ACCUPLACER exam. The ACCUPLACER exam will gauge the student's English and Math skills. Students are then placed according to their ACCUPLACER scores. Those who score high enough may not need to take FP English and/or Math courses.

8.7 University Foundation College

The University Foundation College (UFC), licensed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Qatar, is the first foundation program in Qatar and the region that is certified and quality assured by the North Consortium of United Kingdom Universities (NCUK). Established in 2017, UFC is designed to provide foundation programs that will qualify its graduates for admission to 1 of the 16 NCUK universities as well as other international universities.

The designated United Kingdom National Agency for the Recognition and Comparison of international qualifications and skills (NARIC) conducted an analysis of the UFC foundation program against key higher education standards in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. This analysis found UFC's International Foundation Year (IFY) equivalent to GCE A Level, Senior Secondary Certificate of Education 2, Advanced Placement (AP), and first year courses of a 4-year degree. As such, the UFC program responds to the need in Qatar for foundation programs to bridge the academic and personal skills gap in high school graduates seeking admission to local and international universities. Its quality assurance by NCUK, which guarantees students who successfully complete the program

admission to the second year of 4-year bachelor degree program colleges, uniquely sets it apart from other foundation programs in the country.

8.7.1 Admission and Courses

The UFC offers the IFY program to high school graduates who qualify and a Pre-International Foundation year (Pre-IFY) to lower-performing students. The IFY courses span a full academic year, while the Pre-IFY courses span 6 months. The Pre-IFY students progress to the IFY level upon successful completion of the program. There are four academic pathways for students to choose from in the IFY program: Business, Engineering, Humanities, and Science.

Students take three subject modules in addition to English for Academic purposes (EAP) course. Students take a minimum of 4 h per week for subject modules and 8 h per week for the EAP course. Approximately, 70 students are admitted to the UFC. Of those admitted, 68% are males and 32% are females. Sixteen countries are represented, with 51% of the enrolled students being Qatari.

Eligible students are those who graduate from high school with at least a 60% average and an overall score of 5.0 on the ILETS exam. The UFC's admission criterion is relatively lower than that of its counterpart foundation programs in Qatar, such as the ABP, which requires at least a 75% passing score. These somewhat lower admission standards are explained by the UFC leadership as a means of attracting students who do not qualify for admission in undergraduate and/or foundation programs in Qatar (Table 8.5).

Effective quality assurance guarantees that all students completing the foundation program have the necessary qualifications to enroll and succeed in appropriate degree programs offered in NCUK partnering universities. NCUK maintains and enhances academic quality through a set of strict and collaborative procedures that ensure the integrity and validity of graduating students' qualifications. This is achieved through the development and review of programs, assessments, regulations, audit, and monitoring. As such, all students' assessments and final grades approval are centralized by NCUK (Al-Kubaisy, M., personal communication February 19, 2019).

The success rate of students in the first year was 45% as reported by the UFC's CEO. The list of students' college placement below confirms that the majority of graduating students went on to enroll in UK universities (Table 8.6).

Table 8.5 UFC pathways (UFC, NCUK, The University Consortium)

Business	Engineering	Humanities	Science
Business studies	Physics	Business studies	Chemistry
Economics	Chemistry	Economics	Biology
Business math	Math for engineering	International relations	Math for science
EAP	EAP	EAP	EAP

Table 8.6 Student placement in UFC (UFC, NCUK, The University Consortium)

Institution	Years 1 and 2
University of Aberdeen	5
UK Universities	14
Malaysia	2
Qatar University	2
Turkey	1
Canada	1
Netherlands	1
TBC	3
	29 (total)

8.8 Mind the Gap!

Concerned with the rising remediation rates among high school graduates entering college, the Illinois General Assembly passed the *College and Career Readiness Pilot Program* (Public Act 095-0694) in 2007 with the cardinal aim of ensuring that high school leavers are prepared for post-secondary education. The Act states that:

> There is a direct and significant link between students being academically prepared for college and success in post-secondary education. Many students enter college unprepared for the academic rigors of college and require noncredit remedial courses to attain skills and knowledge needed for regular, credit course work (Baber, Barrientos, Bragg, Castro, Khan, 2009).

This mirrors the reality of the situation in Qatar. According to the University Foundation College's CEO, Prof. Mothana Al-Kubaisy, high school graduates in Qatar lack the basic skills that qualify them to be admitted to and successfully attend freshman year of college. This gap is more noticeable in students graduating from independent schools as compared to those graduating from international schools. He noted that even students who graduate with a 90% success rate from independent schools face numerous difficulties adjusting to a university program.

Professor Al-Kubaisy attributes the causes of this gap to the poor quality of teachers in independent schools, who lack the necessary skills and competencies in teaching the higher order thinking skills that are needed in post-secondary education. Furthermore, students' lack of motivation impacts college and work readiness (Al-Kubaisy, M., personal communication February 19, 2019). Moreover, the weak English language skills of students have become a dominant characteristic of independent school leavers due to the lack of significance given to teaching and learning the language.

To deal with the status quo vis a vis the level of readiness of high school leavers to pursue post-secondary education or embark on careers, a number of remedial programs were created in Qatar, the details of which are aforementioned. Interviews conducted with all of the providers of foundation programs in Qatar lead to the conclusion that students who successfully complete the foundation programs can

see the benefits of such programs as effective educational bridges to post-secondary education.

A study on the effectiveness of the preparatory year/foundation program in Saudi universities, which compared the cumulative average of graduates in bachelor's degree programs before and after implementation of the preparatory year/foundation program, showed that there are positive differences in favor of students who have attended a foundation program (Alshahri, 2017). This certainly supports the need and importance to implement foundation/preparatory programs for students before starting university education. These programs are important to ease the transition of students from a school environment, which is characterized by its conventional nature, irrelevant curricula, lack of motivation, unskilled teachers, and a focus on teaching for passing the test. Lack of readiness for university education can undermine students' motivation, and thus, cause frustration among students, which can untimely lead to dropout or failure.

As such, foundation programs are an important stage in the life of the university student and a difficult challenge for most students as it is a transition from general education to university education. The student may face a difference between general and university education in the overall climate of the study, the nature of the systems, the treatment, the responsibility, and degree of flexibility, methods of evaluation, etc. From this viewpoint, foundation programs can prepare and familiarize students with the university environment and the expectations that come with it.

Needless to say that there remains a need to examine the overall impact of the foundation/ preparatory programs on the progression of public school leavers at post-secondary education. Interestingly, the ABP reported no differences between public school and international schools leavers, while others, namely UFC and CCQ, reported differences between the two groups. More data are needed to shed light on this issue through qualitative and quantitative research and to illustrate the factors behind such significant or insignificant differences. In a similar vein, it would be beneficial for all foundation programs in Qatar to collaborate with each other to ensure that they are working together to prepare and ease transition of public school leavers to post-secondary education and the labor market.

Even still, there are drawbacks for bridging/foundation/ remedial programs. Remediation lengthens time to degree, imposes additional costs on students and colleges, and uses student financial aid for courses that will not count toward a degree (Baber et al., 2009). That is why there is a need to align high school outputs with the requirements of post-secondary and employment. Improved readiness for post-secondary education and careers will certainly reduce the need for remediation, lower educational costs, shorten time to degree, and increase the overall success rate of students enrolling in post-secondary education. Certain assessments can be introduced in high schools in collaboration with post-secondary education institutions to assist decision-makers in identifying areas for improvement and helping close the skills gaps during the senior year.

The good news is that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Qatar has begun to place special focus on teaching English in public schools. Towards this end, a new English curriculum is being introduced and relevant professional devel-

opment is being provided to English language teachers in all schools. In a similar vein, a new course called "Pre-University Skills" has been introduced in public schools in an attempt to bridge the gap between secondary schools' learning outcomes and university requirements (Alrumaihi, S., January, 2019, personal communication). The course is delivered for 2 h per week. Despite inherent teething problems, it is a very positive start for establishing a stronger relationship between schools and post-secondary education.

8.9 Conclusion

The noticeable growth in remedial education in Qatar in recent years draws attention to the distinct division of education that exists between secondary and post-secondary education. Remediation typically consists of programs in English language and basic levels of mathematics and science. The increased number of students enrolled in these programs indicates how more and more high school students are failing to receive the basic skills they need to enter college or the labor market in the first place.

Though students who take remedial courses are more likely to progress to post-secondary education and complete their degrees successfully, critics argue that such interventions prolong the time needed to complete the degree and incur added costs on students and sponsors (Shahin, 2017). Therefore, remediation should be reduced and students in high schools should be made aware of the expectations of post-secondary education. Schools should be made responsible for ensuring that high school leavers are college-ready by the time they leave school. This calls for further examination of the issue of college readiness and curriculum alignment for students, schools, and post-secondary education institutions. These key educational issues should be thoroughly examined in Qatar in order to determine the potential for efficient and effective strategies and approaches to prepare high school leavers for college and careers. The ultimate goal should be to establish a positive relationship between secondary and post-secondary education so as to create an education system capable of preparing high school leavers for post-secondary education and work.

By continuing to implement and evaluate the existing interventions in Qatar, they will evolve in their efforts to assist students to be college- and career-ready when they complete high school. This will have greater impact if theoretical frameworks and research findings are incorporated. What is the effect of college preparatory/remedial programs on students' performance in post-secondary education? How do students perform on college placement tests and other entrance assessments? Do students progress in a timely manner? What other experiences enhance student preparation for transition to college and careers, including student participation in college fairs, campus visits, and career advising? All of these critical questions require adequate answers so as to inform policy-makers and guide them in their conquest to develop an adequate and successful approach to college and career readiness that are tailored to the needs of all stakeholders.

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Chapter 9
The Accreditation of English Language Teacher Education Programs in the Arab Region: The Case of Sultan Qaboos University

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Abstract The chapter presents the case of the teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) program at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) as an exemplary program that has been successful to gain recognition from the US. The chapter begins with describing the actions taken by the program that led to the success in obtaining the recognition from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). To give a full picture of the process, the SQU program was described, elaborating the six key assessments developed to provide evidence that its candidates were meeting the ACTFL standards. It has been stressed that the process of accreditation has led to creating a climate for accreditation with the need to focus on evidence and assessment across all areas of the college and programs. The chapter also points out to the cognitive and organizational restructuring that happened at all the levels. The chapter closes with challenges that faced the program in gaining recognition from ACTFL.

9.1 Introduction

In 2016, the College of Education (CoE) at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in the Sultanate of Oman was "accredited without any further conditions" for a seven-year period by the *National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which is now known as Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The accreditation decision was taken after the teacher education program at SQU fulfilled the basic and quality standards for teacher preparation and after hitting the "target" level in field experiences and faculty standards as evaluated by the board of examiners, and based on the report prepared by the on-site visit team. In this chapter, we reflect on the case of the teaching English as a foreign language*

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_9

(TEFL) program as an exemplary program that was part of the accreditation process. We describe the actions taken by the program that led to success in obtaining recognition from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the world's oldest association in TEFL. In this chapter, we describe SQU's TEFL program from the perspective of published research related to the preparation of foreign language teachers, and through the lens of innovative and comprehensive models of foreign language teacher preparation that are grounded in such research.

It is important to mention that there is a dearth of research on foreign language teacher preparation programs (FLTPP). In particular, the research on the accreditation of FLTPP in the Arab region is very limited. Huhn (2012) points out the absence of qualitative and quantitative research that could present a prototype FLTPP that can serve as an ideal model. What we present in this chapter is a narrative inquiry, supported by data collected on the quality of the SQU TEFL program. As such, this chapter can be considered an attempt to fill this gap in the literature on FLTPP. As we present our own narratives that we lived in establishing this program, we also attempt to reflect on the challenges we faced, the plans we developed, the outcomes we obtained, the data we collected as evidence of the quality of our program, and the lessons we learned. *The achievement of recognition was a systematic accomplishment; it resulted from an extensive process of continuous improvement of the program's abilities, resources, and capacities that began before the college decided to proceed for international accreditation. Before describing the program and reflecting on the details of its journey, it is necessary to provide an overview of SQU and the CoE.*

9.2 SQU and the COE: A Brief Synopsis

Sultan Qaboos University *was established in 1986, marking the first step in establishing the Omani higher education system. Now, there are more than 70 higher education institutions (public and private) operating currently around the governorates of Oman. SQU is still the only public university in Oman, carrying the name of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who has been ruling Oman since 1970. To fulfil its mission, SQU started with five colleges in 1986, and now the number has reached nine, with more than 16,000 students. COE was among the first colleges established and has been developing rapidly with 34 undergraduate and postgraduate programs.*

Since its establishment, SQU has been working on enhancing the quality of its programs, students, and research. This is reflected in the vision of SQU "to continue its national leading role in higher education and community service and to be internationally recognized for innovative research, quality of graduates, and strategic partnerships." *Therefore, assuring the quality of programs has been the concern of SQU, and various means have been used to achieve this target. International academic accreditation is one such effective way that the SQU colleges have invested in.*

CoE embarked on the journey of accreditation in 2011 and received full accreditation from NCATE in 2016. As a part of this process, NCATE requested three of the college's programs to be accredited by specialized professional associations (SPA) recognized by NCATE. Among these programs, the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in English Language Teaching sought recognition by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), as one of the SPAs recommended for English teaching programs. The program received recognition in the spring of 2015, valid until spring 2023.

9.3 TEFL Programs at Sultan Qaboos University: The Emergence of a Model Program

The contents of undergraduate EFL teacher preparation programs cannot be determined in separation from the contexts in which they are practiced. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) has been part of the structure of the public schools in the educational system in Oman since 1970, which witnessed the beginning of Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said's reign of Oman. Since 1970, the country has undergone transformations and modernisation in all sectors including Education. During the past 48 years, TEFL in Oman has passed through numerous stages, particularly in relation to EFL teacher preparation. In the beginning stages, English was mostly taught by non-Omani teachers from neighboring Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Sudan. In the Sultanate of Oman, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has long been an important subject. The government continues to implement reforms in English language education throughout all levels of schools and at the level of teacher education programs. Because English is considered a common international language, developing Omani students' English proficiency is seen as critical for the Sultanate's future.

Globally, TEFL has witnessed several advances in the last three decades in an attempt to help create English-speaking environments and to bring living English into the classroom. Among these strides has been the emergence of standards-based education and standards-based assessments, both of which have reshaped TEFL programs in the different world contexts (Kramsch, 2014). Given such developments, an important inquiry is to examine how Omani teacher candidates develop their English proficiency in order to have effective intercultural interactions and prepare for their future teaching.

In the Arab region, English, more than any other language, is perceived as a world language. In 17 out of 22 Arabic speaking countries (ASC), English is the first foreign language taught at multiple levels of education. More specifically, in the Gulf Cooperating Council (GCC) countries including the Sultanate of Oman, English is widely used for purposes of scholarship, science, technology, communication and other highly specialized activities, not to mention the casual exchanges with foreigners in public places, including tourists or expats working in Arab

countries. Therefore, it is not surprising to note that English language teaching is provided through four broad categories: (1) as a core subject in the general education system, (2) as a service subject in colleges including different speciality areas, (3) as a service training course to the general public for those that need further skills training to enter the job market, and finally, (4) as an in-service training course to personnel working in different sectors. Scholars have argued that despite the prominent role English has assumed in ASC, there is limited research on the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Javid, Farooq, & Gulzar, 2012). A number of studies have reported dissatisfaction with the outcomes of EFL programs at all levels (Alazemi, 2017; Al-Nwaiem, 2012; Haimour, 2012; Jalilifar, Mehrabi, & Mousavinia, 2014; Javid, Al-Asmari, & Farooq, 2012), and that employers perceive the ability of the graduates to function effectively in English inside the classroom is not at the expected level (Al-Mahrooqi, Abrar-Ul-Hassan, & Cofie, 2016; Denman, 2014).

The role of the teacher in the success of the teaching and learning process is paramount. They represent the key element in the success or failure of an educational system, given that a good teacher actively tackles problems that might affect the students, and compensates for any shortcomings in the curriculum or the available educational resources (Anderson, Spooner, Calhoun, & Spooner, 2007; Cox, Malone, & Winke, 2018; O'Shea, Hammitte, Mainzer, & Crutchfield, 2000). The emergence of standards-based education has provided impetus to investigate the quality of teacher education programs all over the world. This, no doubt, applies as well to TEFL programs, particularly considering the introduction of early-EFL in school systems across nearly the whole of ASC. The standards that were developed for ELT, which will be described in brief in this chapter, provided guidelines and indicators for the components that a TEFL program should emphasize, including specialized knowledge, pedagogical methodologies, professional dispositions, ethical practice, and field training. These standards stem from the assumption that when teachers lead their classroom to promote learning, their performance is based on cognitive acts that were shaped by the accumulated knowledge, beliefs, skills, and dispositions about the teaching-learning process that they gained throughout their preparation programs.

After the Ministry of Education gradually replaced the non-Omani workforce with Omani indigenous personnel, there came a demand to have good qualified teachers, and therefore TEFL programs were established in most public and private universities. Currently, those programs compete with other programs in other ASC universities regarding the quality of the graduates. Currently, students commence learning English in public schools from the first grade through the twelfth grade. Students take five classes per week. Despite the long standing history of teaching English in the Sultanate of Oman, there are no publicly published documents or available publications in relation to any quality TEFL program that met national or international TEFL standards, which may act as a guideline or model of best practice for existing EFL teacher preparation programs. Therefore, this chapter represents the first endeavor to shed light on a TEFL program that gained international

recognition by fulfilling the standards of the oldest and most popular SPA, namely, the ACTFL.

The Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) program at Sultan Qaboos University is a teacher education program that specializes in EFL education, and it is part of the College of Education, that is considered the top national higher education institution in Oman. Enrolment in the program ranges from 70 to 80 students per year. The program has a number of outcomes expected of its graduates. These are aligned with the five themes that constitute the CoE's conceptual framework; the InTASC standards, as well as the ACTFL standards. The TEFL program outcomes address a variety of areas, including candidates' knowledge (content, pedagogical, cultural, and interdisciplinary), with emphasis on the development of English language proficiency, the ability to design assessments, use of technology, the ability to create supportive and inclusive learning environments, research skills; communication and collaboration skills, leadership skills, professionalism and lifelong learning, as well as a commitment to the values and ethics of the profession.

9.4 ACTFL Standards: The Research Nexus for the SQU TEFL Program

As noted earlier, the language teaching profession in Oman has been influenced by the standards-based education movement, which has emerged from Western countries. In the United States for example, the development and implementation of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the twenty-first century, previously known as the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (hereafter National Standards), now the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015), have had an impact on TEFL in the Arab region in general, and in Oman in particular. These standards have provided a framework for curriculum reform and change in instructional approaches and assessment.

Because the chapter presents the case of the TEFL program at SQU after it received national recognition from ACTFL, a discussion of the ACTFL standards is relevant. The ACTFL teacher education standards include six principle areas as follows: (1) Language, linguistics, comparisons; (2) Cultures, literatures, cross-disciplinary concepts; (3) Language acquisition theories and instructional practices; (4) Integration of standards into curriculum and instruction; (5) Assessment of languages and cultures; and (6) Professionalism. TEFL programs use these standards to form their programs of study, while they must also fulfil the other requirements pertaining to pedagogy and internship (also known as student teaching). Student teaching, the term often used in the Arab region, is required of all teacher candidates as the culmination of their program of study at which time, a student teacher is placed in a school to work and teach with a master cooperating teacher for a period of time to provide scaffolding into the classroom setting. The length of student

teaching duration varies across TEFL programs in different contexts. At SQU, the duration of student teaching is 5 days a week (6 h per day) over a 15-week semester, which makes a total of 450 h.

The ACTFL Standards for teachers place a strong emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge about the target language's culture. Despite the focus on culture as an essential part of the language classroom, scholars argue that TEFL programs face challenges to ensure that teacher education candidates understand how to adequately and responsively integrate world culture into their own language classrooms, so that its implementation is integrated in meaningful ways (Troyan, 2012). Furthermore, studies have investigated the extent to which the standards and the proficiency movement have influenced FLTPP (Colville-Hall & O'Connor, 2006; Wilbur, 2007). In the United States, for example, it is mandatory for teacher candidates to obtain an official ACTFL score on the computer-based OPI oral interview assessment (ACTFL & CAEP, 2015; Cox et al., 2018; Moser, 2014) as required in their target language for K-12 certification and/or that they pass the portfolio/task-based Education Teaching Performance Assessment (edTPA; Behney, 2016; Liu, Liu, Yu, Li, & Wen, 2014). However, research has also shown that pre-service teachers find it difficult to pass the language proficiency portion of these certification tests, in part because their language classes at the university level tend to not focus on the skills that are needed, including the ability to produce sustained and lengthy discourse in both speech and writing (Russell & Davidson-Devall, 2016). In this regard, Glisan, Swender, and Surface (2013) reported that 45% of 1957 teacher candidates from 2006 to 2012 did not meet the minimum proficiency level for teacher certification. Given the dramatic shortage of language teachers across the United States and elsewhere (Russell & Davidson-Devall, 2016), scholars have proposed changes to teaching curricula that address the proficiency needs of teacher candidates (e.g., Behney, 2016; Kissau, 2014; Troyan & Kaplan, 2015).

Regarding the TEFL program at SQU, OPI has been administered to teacher candidates prior to their teaching practicum course since 2013. In the first administration of the test May, 2013, only 45% of students scored the required Advanced Low level and it was thought that this could have been due to their unfamiliarity with the computer-based interview. In 2015, short pretest courses were developed to familiarize students with this method of assessment and to help with understanding what was required in terms of responses to various questions. Also in 2016, the ELT program communicated with ACTFL, requesting that the requirement for candidates' speaking proficiency be reduced from Advanced Low to Intermediate High, as a minimum standard for language proficiency. Advanced Low was believed to be too high of a bar for candidates in the program. Add to that, Advanced Low, does not equate with the level required in the Ministry of Education's preemployment test (IELTS band 6.0). ACTFL responded positively. Since then, the expected level has been Intermediate High. Interestingly, since the reduction in the expected level, the majority of candidates in the program have been achieving higher than Intermediate High every semester. Part of this could be the training material that students receive

in advance. Another reason could be that candidates are becoming more aware of OPI as a requirement and the rationale for entering the exam.

In addition, it is a requirement that teacher candidates demonstrate their ability to plan, deliver, and assess standards-based instruction either through the edTPA portfolio or through the ACTFL-CAEP accreditation process. Therefore, studies have investigated the types of content knowledge that are most important for TEFL teachers and have questioned whether those bodies of knowledge reflect what the teacher licensure tests focus on (Kissau & Algozzine, 2017). Additional studies have investigated the extent to which such standards-based assessments effectively document the knowledge and skills of teacher candidates who are native speakers (Russell & Davidson Devall, 2016). However, most of the data came from purely qualitative studies that included small samples of participants. More quantitative studies that include large samples that report effect size for the results are needed. Furthermore, more robust, cross-cultural, and longitudinal studies are needed, along with research syntheses or meta-analyses, so that the field of FLTPP can better be informed regarding the impact of assessments that prioritize teacher proficiency and standards-based instruction on the entire field of foreign language education. The TEFL program at SQU met these challenges related to teacher candidates' ability to plan, deliver, and assess standards based instruction by developing specific key assessments to measure them. For example, candidates in the program are expected to develop a unit plan in their teaching practice course. A rough draft of rubrics to assess the unit plan was first developed in 2013. This was then updated in 2014 to include reference to theories of Language Acquisition, which was required in the ACTFL report. Table 9.1 below shows candidate results as documented in the submitted report.

Table 9.1 Candidate performance in the unit plan across cohorts

	Cohort	2008	2009	2010	2011	Group total
Assessments	Number of participants	2	6	24	17	49
1. Description of content	Mean score per outcome	3.000	2.833	2.840	3.000	2.900
2. Theoretical framework		3.000	2.500	2.720	2.706	2.700
3. Unit goals		1.500	2.167	2.240	2.706	2.360
4. Unit objectives		1.500	2.500	2.520	2.765	2.560
5. Assessment of student learning		3.000	2.667	2.880	2.941	2.880
6. Pedagogy		3.000	3.000	2.560	2.882	2.740
7. Expectation of implementation		1.500	3.000	2.520	2.647	2.580
Mean overall outcome score by cohort		2.357	2.667	2.611	2.807	2.674
Mean total score for unit plan by cohort		78.57%	88.89%	87.05%	93.56%	78.57%
Range of total scores by cohort		71.4–85.7	81–95.2	42.9–100	85.7–100	42.9–100

Analysis of data showed that of the 49 students who submitted the unit plan, the overall average score was 89.14%, which would equate to an A in the SQU system. In 2018, in preparation for the second cycle of accreditation, the College of Education carried out a comprehensive review of the unit plan document and its scoring rubrics to generate a set that is generic to all majors, one that reflects the InTASC standards. As for English major students, this new set of rubrics is being revised again to ensure that they address the ACTFL standards and corresponding language.

Since its 2013 release, the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, which comprised the ACTFL 5C's Goal Areas and 11 associated standards, have had a global impact on TEFL programs and EFL teaching. The standards' so-called 5Cs goal areas—Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 3)—have provided further guidance on the indicators that should guide TEFL programs in universities and EFL teaching in schools. The ACTFL twenty-first Century Skills Map denotes that student engagement in learning authentic materials and cultures relies on the collaboration of teachers and faculty and their ability to incorporate various technologies in their pedagogies (Drewelow & Mitchell, 2015). Furthermore, the primary goal of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages is to tie communication to culture by applying connections and comparisons to both native and global societies in order to prepare learners for successful careers in a global society (NSFLEP, 2015). Ideally, this is what the SQU TEFL program is working on in collaboration with the MoE, as the CoE prepares for the coming CAEP accreditation scheduled in 2022.

9.5 ACTFL Key Assessments

In its preparation for *obtaining the recognition from ACTFL*, the SQU TEFL program developed six key assessments in order to provide evidence that its candidates were meeting the ACTFL standards.

9.5.1 Key Assessment 1: Candidate Content Knowledge

The main purpose of this assessment is to provide evidence that candidates in the program were meeting standard 1: Language proficiency: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational. There were two components to this key assessment: (a) the Ministry of Education (MoE) preemployment test—IELTS test, which is required by MoE prior to employment as a teacher and (b) a content analysis test which assesses the subject knowledge that has been learned by candidates prior to undertaking student-teaching.

9.5.1.1 Ministry of Education's Preemployment Test

In the Omani educational context, the Ministry of Education requires prospective teachers to score an overall band 6.0 on IELTS prior to employment. In May 2014, the College of Education arranged for 32 students who would be graduating that year to sit the IELTS test at the University Language Centre's IELTS test center. This included students from various cohorts ranging from 2007 to 2010. Since then, data on students' performance on IELTS has been collected in preparation for the second accreditation cycle.

9.5.1.2 Content Analysis Test

In order to assess student subject area knowledge and their ability to link the content they acquire in their English major courses with practice, a content test was designed by a group of instructors from the English Department of the College of Arts. One major purpose of the test was to gauge student readiness for student teaching practice as the test required students to draw on all previous studies and link this knowledge to language teaching. In this test, students were given a story suitable for elementary schools with attached instructions. The test requires the students to write a critique of the content. Student work was graded according to a specific scoring rubric developed by the test designers. Students were asked to give examples of how they could use the text in the classroom and its objectives. They were also asked to provide a rationale for the activities they choose with support from second language acquisition theory in the design of tasks. Other aspects relevant to ACTFL standards were also reflected in the design of this test, such as asking students to state how they would use the material in creating a creative and supportive classroom and how to link the material to other disciplines.

9.5.2 Key Assessment 2: GPA Analysis of Content Courses from the English Education Program

This assessment is mainly used to provide evidence that students are meeting Standard 2. Cultures, Literatures, Cross-Disciplinary Concepts. The assessment consists of GPA analysis of student performance in seven courses (out of 19 key courses), as they are representative of the content of most of the core courses taught to Bachelor's in English students. These are: ENGL 2327 Phonology and Morphology, ENGL 3217 Children's Literature, ENGL 3329 Syntax and Semantics, ENGL 3129 Research Project, ENGL 4421 Language Acquisition, ENGL 4325 Applied Linguistics, and ENGL 4329 Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics. Alignment tables were created between the seven courses and ACTFL standards and sub standards, as well as to the College of Education conceptual framework.

9.5.3 Key Assessment 3: The Unit Plan

This is used as evidence for students meeting Standard 3: Language Acquisition Theories and Instructional Practices. The purpose of this key assessment is to assess students' ability to design and implement an effective unit plan to achieve specific goals of ELT for a particular grade level taught during the Teaching Practicum course. Students are required to choose a unit/theme/module from the textbooks/curriculum they are assigned to teach in student teaching, and develop it into a well-designed unit plan that meets the Omani ELT standards of the Ministry of Education and the international standards endorsed by ACTFL. The unit plan is a comprehensive document that includes lesson plans, samples of teaching, and assessment materials, as well as reflections.

9.5.4 Key Assessment 4: Classroom Observation Tool to Assess Student Teaching

Similar to Key Assessment 3, this is used as evidence for students meeting Standard 3: Language Acquisition Theories and Instructional Practices**.** This was also designed in terms of the ACTFL standards. For example, one major component that the observation tool examines is mastery of subject knowledge. This is broken down into: content knowledge, language proficiency, cross-disciplinary knowledge, and Knowledge of cultural aspects addressed in the unit/lesson. Furthermore, the observation tool examines candidate ability to diversify teaching and learning approaches. Some elements that come under this are suitability of methods to learner age-group and diverse needs (individual differences, learning disabilities considered), addressing Ministry of Education goals and principles of Language Acquisition in instruction, organizing the learning environment and employment of learning resources, media, and technology. All are strongly emphasized in the ACTFL standards.

9.5.5 Key Assessment 5: Assessing Impact on Student Learning Through Portfolio Assessment

Key assessment 5 used in the English Language Teaching Program is the Professional Teaching Portfolio in CUTM4500 Student Teaching, which is also a graded component in the course. This meets Standard 5: Assessment of Languages and Cultures—Impact on Student Learning and also Standard 6: Professional Development, Advocacy, and Ethics. Before the assessment tool was developed, a set of outcomes were identified; these were aligned with the CoE's conceptual framework and the ACTFL standards. This was followed by the design of assessment rubrics based on portfolio outcomes. Students were also expected to indicate the kind of evidence, in the form of artifices they are relying on to show their meeting of outcomes/rubrics.

Examples of evidence are lesson plans and unit plans; self-assessment forms and professional goals, student work samples, teaching philosophy, weekly reflections, evidence of professional development activities, developed tests, and assessment tasks and action research.

9.5.6 Key assessment 6: Assessment of Candidate Oral Proficiency Through OPI

This is a standardized English Language speaking test (in the form of an oral interview) that is administered by ACTFL. It was chosen by the TEFL program in the College of Education as an additional assessment and as further evidence for standard 1.

9.6 The Impact of Accreditation

Subsequent to obtaining recognition of the TEFL Programme by the ACTFL, it was equally important to reflect on the impact of the process and to evaluate the outcomes; not to mention that it was important also to celebrate. Additionally, it was important to think of how to sustain success and benefit from the gains of the CoE accreditation and the EFL program recognition. What was the second step? A question that came to the forefront for the whole community in the college (faculty, staff, and students). The answer to this question was not straightforward, as it was important to examine the impact that the CoE accreditation and TEFL program recognition has yielded. On the one hand, it has helped the CoE and TEFL to identify areas of improvement. On the other, it equally brought to the forefront some related issues regarding the impact of the critical changes in accreditation and program recognition processes and expectations on the role of college administration and faculty members. Of particular importance are the concepts of (1) creating a climate for accreditation, (2) the need to focus on evidence and assessment across all areas of the college and programs, (3) and cognitive and organizational restructuring.

9.6.1 Creating a Climate for Accreditation

Expectedly, the push to seek accreditation by the CoE collided with deeply rooted traditional practices, and the resistant voices that wanted the process to be frozen on the grounds that the Omani context is different and that the standards are coming from a very different Western context. The proponents of accreditation within the CoE and recognition of its programs believed the quality is a cosmopolitan terminology and that quality standards are independent of context. The opponents, alternatively, believed that importing standards that were developed elsewhere is faulty

procedure. In between, there was a third party that made the compromise of seeking accreditation and recognition by adapting the standards to the Omani context and evaluating the outcomes of the process. The third party, represented by the college administration, did not want to enforce the process, but rather wanted the college faculty to join the process voluntarily.

Many critics of the pursuit of accreditation and program recognition fear that raising standards will mean more work for both faculty and students and raising the bar could simply disclose the areas of weaknesses, for which intervention measures should be taken. Finding the optimal balance among international standards, national context, available resources, and ability to face the expected challenges was important to consider before the initiation of the whole process. We knew that of all the reforms necessary to fulfil the ACTFL standards, perhaps none would generate more controversy among the faculty than building a rigorous assessment system from admission to graduation. For admission, for example, the colleges of education in the Arab region as well as in Western countries have endured scathing criticism by critics who have charged that because education programs admit the least-able college students, out of necessity education curricula lack academic rigor (Bush, Frank, & Dixon-Krauss, 2014; Cochran-Smith, 2005). Additionally, the teacher education curriculum has been criticized for being laden with too much theory and not enough practice (Huhn, 2012), as having theory that is disconnected from practice (Zeichner, 2012), and as having subject matter that is disconnected from teaching methods and learning theory (Loewenberg Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008). We knew in the CoE that we will have such disputes over which is more essential for our candidates, content knowledge in the subject areas or effective pedagogy, a controversy which also exists in Western countries. The controversy in the CoE at SQU meant that serious measures and drastic changes would need to be taken in order to make a difference.

We perceived accreditation of teacher education programs as a means for improving our inputs and outcomes. We knew that some would laud the process, while others would deride it. The final decision of seeking accreditation and program recognition was founded on the claims made by the NCATE on the expected benefits of accreditation. These include: (1) ensuring that colleges of education meet external quality standards; (2) encouraging institutions to modify their programs to reflect changes in knowledge and practice; (3) providing a common set of national standards; (4) strengthening institutional self-evaluation and catalyzing program improvement; and (5) deterring decreases in resource allocations (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008).

9.6.2 Focus on Developing Assessments and Collecting Evidence

Developing an assessment system at the college and program levels was one important input and outcome of the accreditation and program recognition process that we undertook. Regardless of the balance and/or controversy regarding the cost and

value of program recognition, we realized that we need to continue on increasing accountability relating to student learning outcomes that transcend individual course grades (Murray, 2005). Sometimes this conversation focuses on the potential uses of summative and formative assessments, and at other times, it is more generically discussed with regard to the need to establish clear and convincing evidence of high-level effective student learning. Therefore, it was important to know that a combination of summative, formative, and continuous assessment and evaluation is the perfect method to monitor the quality of the candidates and prove the quality of the program. This was a direct impact of the program recognition process that we implemented. We learned that TEFL program recognition would require significant responses on our part and that of these responses, perhaps the most important is to establish a culture of evidence and assessment. This involved thinking of the means that will be used to assess student learning as we discussed earlier in this chapter. It also involved estimating the costs of developing and maintaining the databases and processes necessary to document student learning outcomes and continuous Improvement.

Going through accreditation and program recognition had an impact on creating a culture of evidence and assessment (Anderson et al., 2007; Brooks & Darhower, 2014; McAlpine & Dhonau, 2007). This culture of evidence included the articulation of claims about what the expected student learning outcomes are and how to ensure obtaining concrete evidence on their progress towards achieving them. The nature of the collected evidence was comprehensive as it covered knowledge, skills, and dispositions. It is honest to note that such culture made us reflect on things we never gave attention to. A good example is the assessment of the dispositions of our candidates. We learned that all major elements of a student's education are subject to assessment, and that assessment needs to permeate all aspects of the academic enterprise.

9.6.3 Cognitive and Organizational Restructuring

Accreditation is not a simple and easy process that can be managed by one person (Bardo, 2009). Conversely, it is an institutional effort that is based on collaborative work and continuous communication in both directions: bottom-up and top-down. The accreditation, per se, has had an impact on both the CoE and TEFL program, as well as on the personnel involved, particularly the faculty who led and moderated the whole process, besides administrative staff and students. This impact can be well described by the terms cognitive and organizational restructuring. The cognitive restructuring refers to the acquisition of knowledge by the faculty in the first place, and then by the administrative staff and students. It was important for the TEFL program faculty to learn about accreditation and to know the scientific terminology used in such process. The cognitive restructuring is not limited to possessing knowledge, but also involves the expression of frustration about the lack of knowledge.

It was necessary, for example, to conduct several workshops for the faculty, staff and students on the different phases and steps of accreditation. Examples include,

alignment with standards, development of key assessments, the usefulness of portfolios, and field experiences as a core component in teacher education. It was equally important to have these workshops presented by faculty who had experience and knowledge and also by consultants with whom the college and program worked. The consultants were nominated by the NCATE board members and experts. Additionally, the organizational restructuring involved prioritizing communication, collaboration, and management. These three processes were at the heart of the process and meant much more than asking questions about how things should be done. They reflected continuous engagement and exchange of data on a daily basis. The program, for example, used *Livetext* for electronic data management. There was a fixed timeline for data collection and data analysis. There were tasks dictated from the top management as represented by the college administration and accreditation steering committee, i.e. top down; and there were tasks that were requested and communicated by the program to the college administration and by the students to the program faculty, i.e. bottom-up. Therefore, both cognitive and organizational restructuring were necessary to succeed in effectively navigating the route to ACTFL recognition.

9.7 Benefits Earned and Lessons Learned

TEFL program recognition as a part of the CoE at SQU accreditation process brought out an amazing spirit of loyalty and solidarity among the college and program community (faculty, staff, and students) as well as the broader Omani community (stakeholders, end users, and partners, such as the MoE). The challenge now is how the CoE and the TEFL program can accelerate the momentum that it gained during the accreditation process and connect it to the unique spirit of cohesion and harmony generated in its community, so as to create a platform for development, progress, and collaboration. This requires that we reflect on some of the learned lessons that the accreditation endeavor left with us. The learned lessons refer to the ideas we developed, the beliefs that were altered, the behaviors that we shaped, the skills that we required, and the attitudes that we changed along the journey.

We earned several benefits and learned many lessons. The benefits earned are as follows: (1) As a result of the program recognition and CoE accreditation, we were able to identify the areas of strengths, weaknesses, and improvement. The key assessments and the college assessment system helped us to recognize the aforementioned areas and develop a profile for our students based on collected evidence, (2) The recognition of the program by the oldest and most prestigious international body in TEFL was a direct message to our students, tutors, and the outside community that our TEFL program provides quality education and that our graduates can confidently pursue employment anywhere in the Arab region, as well as elsewhere, where English is taught as a foreign language in schools, (3) The college obtained proof that the TEFL program, compared to other programs that did not seek SPA recognition, has many areas of excellence, if not all, based on fulfilling the

standards of an important SPA. Such fulfilment is an indication that the program follows best practices in TEFL teacher education. It is also a testimony to our partners such as the Ministry of Education, the parents of students in schools, and the general public in Oman, and elsewhere in the Arab region, (4) through the CoE accreditation, we boosted institutional ownership among the program faculty and students, which resulted in changing negative attitudes, increasing loyalty, and improving performance, (5) One unseen or rather unfelt benefit is that we learned and gained tremendous experience in accreditation and program recognition procedures. Such experience allows the faculty who led the accreditation work to act as advisors to other programs in the college and the university, as equally to other TEFL programs in other universities in the Arab region.

Throughout the accreditation journey we equally learned several lessons: (1) Before taking the decision to seek accreditation and SPA recognition, it is important to ensure the support of the top administration at the college and university levels. It is important to admit that unless the college took first the decision to seek NCATE accreditation, the TEFL program would not have initiated the process. Also the financial support that we received from the university was indispensable to continue in the process. (2) Forming teams and distributing tasks is necessary in order to decrease both the load and resistance of faculty carrying out the work. It is important to note that the accreditation steering committee at the college level facilitated accreditation work and moderated the whole process. Alternatively, the program faculty focused on things that were specific to the program, such as the key assessments at the program level. (3) The program faculty should follow the data collection to minute detail and should ensure that all faculty and students gain knowledge in using electronic platforms. (4) The accreditation process does not involve the institution alone but rather it needs the support and contribution of other partners and stakeholders. In the case of TEFL program recognition, we could not have achieved our goals without the help and support of the MoE in Oman. The work done by cooperating teachers in schools should be applauded and highlighted. (5) Having a detailed plan is necessary prior to the initiation of the accreditation and recognition procedures. The plan should involve carrying out alignment with the target standards at the course and program levels. This step helped us identify the gaps and expect where we will have serious challenges and raise questions for which answers were not easy or straightforward but rather complicated and involved hard decisions. (6) Taking decisions based on consensus by all partners involved. (7) After the initiation of the process it is important to block any regretful remarks and instead discuss how to.

9.8 Challenges of the Process

The process of program review did not go without challenges. To start with, the design of assessment tools was a very long process and it had to follow a number of stages, where tools were designed, revised, and improved. Moreover, administration

of some key assessments, such as OPI, did not always go smoothly. In its first two years of administration, OPI was initially administered by the Language Centre (LC) of the university, based upon a request from College of Education. This was in consideration of the LC's expertise with language assessment, as they had an effective and efficient language assessment unit. However, student unfamiliarity with the test and lack of training material impacted student results, and many scored below the expected level of Advanced Low. Later, the administration of the test moved to the English language Unit of College of Education, but there were often technical problems linked with the test; e.g., the portal not opening, internet connection issues, or even problems with student headphones.

Another source of challenge is that while the program review is housed in the College of Education, the program itself is offered by three different entities at SQU. These are the Center of Preparatory Studies (formerly the Language Centre), where students take English foundation courses and language proficiency courses; the English Department in College of Arts, where students take their major courses such as linguistics courses, literature courses, and courses on topics relevant to language acquisition; and obviously College of Education, where students take educational courses on psychology, foundation of education, educational technology, and more direct teacher training courses, such as teaching methods and student practicum. All three are main stakeholders, and their involvement in the process is vital. However, communication between the three different departments can sometimes be sporadic and intermittent; this makes it difficult to get everybody on board as far as the accreditation process is concerned. Add to that, people change. These could be people who were fully involved in the review process, be it the design of assessments or administrators and facilitators. Replacing these people with new personnel who are fully committed to the process takes time and effort.

Data collection as well has not always been a smooth process. Although the College of Education established an Assessment Unit, which helps a lot in compiling and analyzing data using LiveText (a data management system designed for accredited universities or universities working on accreditation), there is still some data that needs to be retrieved from outside the college such as student IELTS results. Accessing these can sometimes be difficult considering their confidentiality.

9.9 Conclusion

SQU's road to gain accreditation from ACTFL was not paved. Various challenges surrounded the Omani case to be among the first Arab universities gaining accreditation in its English Teacher Education program. However, the vision of the SQU's leadership to internationalize its programs, to assure their quality and to be competitive in the region is the core imperative for accreditation of the English Teacher program. This chapter, based on our experience and daily business with accreditation at CoE, is an attempt to document the journey of the program, presenting a successful case of ACTFL accreditation for an English program in the Arab world.

Through the accreditation of the English program, SQU presents a model for the Arab universities and developing nations in getting international accreditation. The program has gone through intended changes to align with American ACTFL standards. The six key assessments designed by the CoE faculty have proved that the program has hit the target in meeting these requirements of ACTFL standards, and therefore the quality of graduates is maintained. Indeed, the CoE has learned through this process that improving the inputs and outputs are the key approach to assure the quality of the program. Despite the numerous challenges, the accreditation of the English program at SQU has brought successful reforms to the program that the SQU leadership is proud of. To conclude, the CoE experience can be of benefit to other universities in the Arab world when pursuing international accreditation.

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Chapter 10
Establishing a National English Language Accrediting Body in Turkey: The Case of DEDAK

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Abstract This article discusses the development of a national English language accrediting body in Turkey, namely DEDAK—Dil Eğitimi Değerlendirme ve Akreditasyon Kurulu (Accreditation and Evaluation Board for Language Education). The article analyses the environment in which the accreditation was developed, providing information on the origins of and the rationale for such an accreditation scheme, as well as the political context within which it emerged. The article further covers the developmental phases of the accreditation scheme including challenges, turning points, requirements for authorization and finally a reflection on the process. In doing this, the article focuses on how, during the development, DEDAK ensured that the standards and the operational protocols were developed, implemented, and evaluated by the field with widespread representation.

10.1 Introduction

Accreditation in higher education is a process, whereby standards for good practice in a particular field are established, implemented, and evaluated either by a recognized, independent institution or by a government agency commissioned to undertake such tasks. Institutions or programs seeking accreditation apply for eligibility, undergo a comprehensive substantiated compliance process, and are eventually granted the accredited status, if deemed successful. In general, there are two types of accreditation in higher education. Institutional accreditation oversees higher education institutions, often colleges and universities as a whole, from an organizational effectiveness perspective, taking academic and administrative processes into consideration relative to established standards. On the other hand, specialized and professional accreditation agencies, also commonly referred to as

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_10

programmatic accreditors, review a particular program of an academic institution within the scope of specific quality standards for that field of study in addition to administrative standards.

Accrediting agencies take many forms and shapes depending on the regulatory environment they operate in as well as constituents they serve. Nevertheless, when reputable and long-standing accreditation agencies are examined, some commonalities are typically observed (Hamm, 1997, pp. 10–11). Among such similarities are:

- An economically and administratively independent organizational structure
- Standards and processes developed by experts with widespread input from the field
- High ethical standards and regard for fiduciary responsibilities
- Transparent and accountable policies and practices
- Observation of principles of peer-review
- Shared governance
- Recognition by government agencies and membership organizations.

10.2 Higher Education Accreditation in the United States

The scope of any given accreditation agency and the constituents it serves are crucial factors to fully comprehend its structure and operations. In most countries, the department of education or a designated state office—typically a monopoly—provides accreditation or a similar service in the form of regulation. However, there is no blanket accreditation that applies to all layers of higher education in the United States, a country that has a long tradition of accreditation, with more than a century, and unequivocally maintains a leading role in the field.

There are three types of accreditation organizations in the US: regional, national, and programmatic. The regional accreditors, such as Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), provide accreditation services to higher education institutions according to the six regions they operate in. This most common form of institutional accreditation requires compliance with established standards for higher education institutions as a whole. The national accreditors, e.g. Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), typically accredit for-profit, career, and vocational schools nationwide. Lastly, specialized and professional accreditors, like Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), and others, provide programmatic accreditation with special focus on the requirements of the field, such as engineering, architecture, business etc. Programmatic accreditors are typically recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). In addition, most programmatic accreditation agencies are members of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA), whose mission is to provide a collaborative forum and a collective voice for

organizations that assure the quality of specialized and professional higher education programs and schools ("ASPA's Role and Function", 2019). It is fair to assert that accreditation in the US is the outcome of concerted efforts of multiple governmental and independent organizations on different layers, and has proven to be effective and sustainable so much so that it is also an exported service.

10.3 Higher Education Accreditation in Turkey

Accreditation is a relatively new term in the Turkish higher education context. The first accreditation initiatives started as early as 2002 by MÜDEK, an independent forum of deans of engineering colleges in Turkey, in an effort to establish and implement the standards for good practice for engineering programs in Turkey (Tantekin-Ersolmaz, 2018, p. 79). Originally modeled after ABET, this grassroots movement started program review in 2003 and acted as the de facto accreditor of engineering programs until registered as a public association in 2007, and subsequently recognized by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), the ultimate organization governing the higher education system in Turkey. With its hundreds of accredited programs in 44 Turkish universities, MÜDEK today is a well-respected accreditation agency, which is recognized by European Network of Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAEE) and is a signatory of the Washington Accord ("MÜDEK Akreditasyon Listesi", 2018).

The MÜDEK accreditation initiative shifted the paradigm in Turkish higher education and paved the way for other fields in that similar independent organizations of college deans followed suit in almost all areas of higher education, from education to nursing. Between 2010 and 2015, Turkish higher education witnessed a surge in accreditation agencies in almost all fields. As a matter of fact, YÖK had long been seeking an approach to translate the quantitative growth it created in the past decade to qualitative expansion. In 2015, an independent body for quality assurance in higher education was formed by YÖK, and a number of legislations were introduced to regulate the accreditation context. In this newly introduced model, YÖK still maintained its grip over institutional accreditation for universities to a certain degree; nevertheless, created a system of authorization, where programmatic accreditation is "outsourced" to independent accreditation agencies. Today, there are ten programmatic accreditation agencies that are recognized by YÖK, and a number of other agencies are currently seeking recognition ("Agencies with Active Registration", 2019).

10.4 University Preparatory Programs in Turkey

Currently, there are approximately 183 universities in Turkey, 110 of which have been established within the last 12 years to meet the demand for higher education of the growing middle class, as well as to fulfill the economic and political aspirations

of the nation ("Üniversitelerimiz", 2019). This exponential growth inevitably triggered a simultaneous rise in the university-housed preparatory programs, which are, essentially, one-year intensive language programs, aiming to bring students to the required level of English, typically CEFR B2, to pursue their studies in their respective English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) departments. It should be noted that EMI in the Turkish context is an indicator of perceived quality and a determining factor in students' choice of study destination for longer-term occupational, academic, and recreational reasons (West, Güven, Parry and Ergenekon, 2015, p. 58).

The first form of university preparatory programs in Turkey appears around the 1960s, whose primary mission was to serve students failing to meet the required level of language competency for admission. In the subsequent years, many EMI institutions adopted this approach, thus becoming the norm for most institutions. Today, Turkey is a leading country in terms of total faculty and student numbers in university intensive English programs, with an estimated 12,000 instructors serving approximately 200,000 students, annually. Furthermore, Turkey is one of the prominent countries in Europe with its leading scholarly activities in the field of ESL/EFL, accumulated know-how in language teaching and administration, and outstanding scholars that take active roles in the field. Nevertheless, the university preparatory programs face many challenges as well.

In 2008, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University initiated a forum for discussion, commonly called Directors' Meeting thereafter, for the university preparatory program administrators, similar to council of deans that had been mentioned earlier. The initial motive was to convene the university preparatory program administrators so that they can discuss common problems and solutions, advocate for the programs, and voice concerns relating to the regulatory context. Since then, the Directors' Meeting has convened annually and served as the largest independent organization in Turkey to represent university preparatory programs. Every year, scores of administrators from universities and colleges meet at a host university to address current issues and trends, assign task forces to accomplish certain duties, and release a report to be communicated to policymakers and the public.

10.5 The Need for a National Accreditation Scheme

Accreditation is perennially a highly relevant topic of the Directors' Meetings for a number of reasons. YÖK has always provided the legal framework for operational purposes; however, there was lack of quality standards for language teaching organizations that would provide a benchmark, especially for the newly-established programs. University preparatory programs were commonly using international standards for curriculum, assessment, and other relevant matters often developed by independent organizations. Nonetheless, a comprehensive national framework was conspicuously absent. Secondly, there was a local, and rather belated, trend towards accreditation by other fields in Turkish higher education, and university preparatory programs felt the pressure to take action on that matter. Thirdly, university

preparatory programs have always been unfairly scrutinized mainly due to unrealistic expectations for student achievement. In less than 8 months, programs are expected to bring predominantly beginner level students to a proficiency level that would allow them to pursue their academic studies in English (Dearden, 2015, p. 15). This "mission impossible" pushed programs to seek external means to verify that the program is of high quality and abides by national or international standards. Last but not least, it should be noted that Turkey has a highly-centralized higher education context, so an opportunity to self-regulate could not have been missed.

Even though random discussions took place in the previous meetings, it was not until the Fourth Directors' Meeting in 2010 that a strong and unified message to establish a national accreditation scheme for language programs was articulated for the first time. Unfortunately, this intention yielded no tangible outcome, due to the fact that Directors' Meeting had a fluid structure for a long period, and there was little follow-up at the initial stages.

The Sixth Directors' Meeting in 2012 marked a historic turning point for accreditation efforts in Turkey. Following extensive deliberations on the structure, legal status, funding, and YÖK recognition, a task force comprising five members from public and foundation universities has been assigned to focus on accreditation for university preparatory programs. The charge of the task force was to do the preliminary work for the establishment of the national accreditation board and provide a report in the next scheduled Directors' Meeting.

10.6 The Formation of a Local Accreditation Scheme: DEDAK

The first decision of the task force was to work in two geographical subgroups in the interest of time and finances. The İzmir subgroup started to work on the legal framework and organizational structure, whereas the İstanbul subgroup focused on working in standard areas. The task force met more than 15 times in this period, both in subgroups and as a whole, either in İzmir or İstanbul.

As was the case with the other national accreditors, the task force decided to adopt the MÜDEK approach and register the organization as a public association (Turkish: dernek). To this end, by-laws have been drafted with close supervision of legal units at members' home institutions. The name of the organization was designated as DEDAK—Dil Eğitimi Değerlendirme ve Akreditasyon Kurulu (Accreditation and Evaluation Board for Language Education). In addition, the organizational structure was prepared, with provisions on the formation of executive, supervisory, advisory, and other respective boards. A 2-day meeting on the provisions of the bylaws and governance was held in İzmir with the Chair of the Commission for the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (YÖDEK), which later morphed into the present-day YÖKAK (Higher Education Quality Council). This meeting was made possible following an in-person briefing with the President of YÖK about DEDAK in St. Louis, MO-USA, during the NAFSA Conference.

The task force also held a meeting with the Executive Director of Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) during a conference on quality and standards in language teaching in İzmir. Later, a webpage (www.dedak.org) was also created to provide updated information on the developments to those who are interested. The task force had long discussions on the membership format, whether to register institutional or individual members. Due to the fact that university preparatory program directors rotate unnecessarily frequently, the task force initially resolved to accept institutional members for consistency and continuity purposes.

At the end of the first year, a detailed presentation on the task force's activities was delivered during the Seventh Directors Meeting in October 2013. The developments were welcomed with great appreciation and enthusiasm both by program directors and other participants from YÖK, public as well as press. Eventually, the DEDAK task force was encouraged to start seeking ways for YÖK recognition, which was widely believed to be the most important step for the organization. It deserves mention that it is almost impossible to obtain legitimacy and operate without government endorsement in a highly-regulated higher education context like Turkey. A DEDAK representative was embedded with the committee whose mission was to convey the outcomes of the Seventh Directors Meeting to YÖK. The committee met YÖK representatives in Ankara on November 28, 2013 and provided information on the recent developments. YÖK representatives suggested they submit an official application without delay. Immediately afterwards, the task force drafted an application and contacted YÖK officials for feedback on the format and contents of the application. However, no response was received despite multiple attempts by task force members. Later, it was realized that the submission of the application coincided with a restructuring period within YÖK, which resulted in the dissolution of YÖDEK, the primary recipient of the application. This impasse put DEDAK task force into an inevitable wait-and-see period for recognition; however, members continued to work on standards, advocate for the organization, and seek ways of funding. It should be noted at this point that DEDAK continued without funding until official registration in 2016, and task force members spent out-of-pocket or used university funds for DEDAK-related activities, such as travel, accommodation, and meals.

The 2014 Directors' Meeting came as a surprise to DEDAK task force members, when they realized they had been excluded from the program without notice. The theme and agenda of Directors' Meetings are typically left at the discretion of the host university administrators, who generally model previous year's meeting with minor or nonsubstantial changes. However, the organizers of the 2014 meeting appointed a random moderator for the accreditation focus group meeting, who had no previous knowledge about DEDAK and its activities nor accreditation as a whole. This resulted in a temporary state of confusion, suspicion, and frustration among the task force members; nevertheless, they managed to report on their activities at the closing session. The constituents suggested to the task force to put activities on hold, until YÖK officially announces the new framework for accreditation. Following the meeting, the task force reconnected with key YÖK personnel, especially those who would potentially take leading positions in the newly forming

YÖKAK—Yükseköğretim Kalite Kurulu (Higher Education Quality Council). In June 2015, the DEDAK task force convened in İstanbul for a 2-day meeting, during which the bylaws were overhauled, standard areas were determined, and a future action plan was drafted. The task force resolved to appoint another member to the fill the seat vacated by one member of the initial group. On August 12, 2015, the task force met a member of YÖK Executive Board to provide updates on DEDAK and solicit feedback on the recognition process. During the meeting, the YÖK Executive Board referred to the recently adopted bylaw on July 23, 2015, which created the legal framework for the establishment of an independent board, i.e. YÖKAK, for institutional accreditation and respectively authorize independent programmatic accreditors.

The task force provided updates on activities to constituents during the Ninth Directors' Meeting held in October 2015. The participants suggested to the task force members to expedite the process for registration of DEDAK as a public association, recruit volunteers, and onboard other Directors' Meeting initiatives, such as T-PLUS (professional development for EFL teachers), the Forum on Curriculum Issues (FOCI), and the Forum on Assessment Issues (FOAI). In early 2016, the task force was extended to nine members, with the inclusion of four new members from public and foundation universities. DEDAK was officially registered on October 7, 2016, with nine members of the task force as the temporary executive board. The approval was received on January 27, 2017. The registration took longer than expected due to bureaucracy. For example, DEDAK needed a mailing address; however, members were not allowed to use their home or work addresses, because of restrictions on the use of public and personal addresses for public associations. The task force rented a virtual office to overcome this obstacle at the cost of its task force members. In addition, all documents, including, but not limited to bylaws, forms etc., had to be signed by nine members residing in four different cities in Turkey, which meant each document had to travel more than 1200 km every time a consent was required.

At the Tenth Directors' Meeting in İzmir, DEDAK announced that it would start accepting individual applications, subsequently receiving 38 submissions. The task force members highlighted the significance of participation, collective decision making, and shared governance in accreditation and requested time, experience, and knowledge of the new members. On December 8, 2016 the task force met the VP of YÖKAK to seek guidance on the application process under new regulations. The VP also suggested establishment of a financial arm to maintain funds.

In February 2017, the DEDAK task force began the first iteration of the quality standards for language programs in four subgroups. After all parties worked on the assigned standards, they were first shared with the group and initial revisions were made through online meetings, with feedback received during these meetings. However, the need for a face-to-face meeting was soon felt to further finalize the standards. On May 5–6, 2017, the task force held a 2-day workshop at İstanbul Bilgi University to finalize the first written version of the 29 standards and guidance for each standard. This made it possible to share the first draft of the standards with DEDAK members before the first official general assembly to be held in June 2017.

10.7 DEDAK's First General Assembly

On June 2, 2017, DEDAK held its first official general assembly with the participation of 28 of its 34 members. As this was the first general assembly meeting, it was also the first gathering of all members of DEDAK from all over Turkey, and the high attendance to the assembly was an indicator of the members' support and dedication to this new organization. During the meeting, task force members provided information on the legal framework, action items, governance, and other respective matters. An essential agenda item of the assembly was the election of the board members, as this is what permits an assembly to function properly. Before the election, members were reminded to elect representatives from both foundation and public universities, as well as from different regions in Turkey. The executive and supervisory boards were elected through a closed vote. Also, minor revisions of the bylaws were proposed and adopted during the meeting. Membership fees were increased to cover costs related to the maintenance of the public association.

10.8 DEDAK's Extraordinary General Assembly and Eleventh Directors' Meeting

The Eleventh Directors' Meeting, held in October 2017 in Ankara was a critical gathering, in which the directors were informed about the current situation of DEDAK and the work and developments that had been completed up to that point. At this meeting, such important issues like the changes and the rationale behind the changes within the executive board of DEDAK, the developments that have occurred since its establishment, the directive and procedural rules documents being developed, and the format and titles of the accreditation standards were shared with over 100 directors and they were given the opportunity to provide feedback and comment on these issues. Additionally, new membership applications were received and information and details about DEDAK were shared and questions from interested participants were answered at the same meeting.

At the end of the same Directors' Meeting, a so-called extraordinary general assembly meeting was convened. The reason for this was the need to discuss and change certain bylaws that had made the general functioning difficult and had been a part of the first set of bylaws accepted during the general assembly meeting in June. All decisions at the meeting were made unanimously, and the members conveyed their full support to the DEDAK executive board through this meeting. At this meeting, the draft standards were shared and feedback was requested from DEDAK members.

10.9 Development of Policies and the 2-Day Meeting in March 2018

After the extraordinary general assembly meeting, the task force, made up of the executive and supervisory board members, began work on the preparation of the directive and procedural rules documents. As a note, one executive member and one supervisory member resigned from the board in February 2018, and two new members were elected to these boards. The two new board members were also present at this 2-day meeting. The documents that the task force worked on during the meeting were deemed necessary because these documents were core documents for the application to be recognized by YÖKAK. The documents being prepared were as follows:

- DEDAK Charter
- DEDAK Operational Policy
- DEDAK Fundamentals of Implementation Policy
- DEDAK Candidate Selection Commission Policy
- DEDAK Accreditation Standards Review Principles Policy
- DEDAK Quality Policy
- DEDAK Ethical Rules Handbook

As a result of all the hard work, a 2-day meeting was held in İstanbul in March 2018 to prepare the final versions of the documents. At this meeting, the documents were finalized and decisions were taken concerning certain action plans for DEDAK.

10.10 Action Plans Following the March 2018 Meeting

In accordance with the decisions taken at the March 2018 meeting, firstly, a DEDAK member was contacted to provide various alternatives for the DEDAK logo. In March 2018, all members and the preparatory program directors were sent an email, providing updates and were asked to provide feedback and support for the prepared documents, nominate candidates for the advisory board, and provide comments on alternatives for a logo. Additionally, current members were asked to consider the names of individuals that could be member-candidates in June of that year.

As planned, in March 2018, three members of DEDAK had a meeting with a former member of YÖDAK to solicit feedback on the prepared standards, policy documents, and further actions. After the meeting, an email was sent to the Turkish Higher Education Quality Board to ask for an appointment to share the current status of DEDAK and receive their opinion on how to move forward concerning the application to be recognized by the Turkish Higher Education Quality Board (YÖKAK).

Upon the request for a meeting with YÖKAK, a meeting date for April 2018 was set. As preparations for this meeting, a new website was created and all relevant

documentation and information was posted on the web, along with a newly approved logo. Also, the final formatting and editing details were carried out on all documents to be presented to YÖKAK members, and files were prepared to be submitted during the meeting. Five DEDAK task force members and two members of YÖKAK, including the vice-chair, were present at the meeting. During the meeting, YÖKAK members stressed the importance and the need for such an accreditation for language programs within universities in Turkey, and expressed their support for DEDAK. They also stressed that inclusiveness—representation of all parties including necessary stakeholders—and the support from peers is key for such an initiative to become successful and suggested that DEDAK take these factors into consideration. They also stressed the importance of this accreditation to be outcomes-based as well as process-oriented. They recommended DEDAK to be clearer and more detailed with appeal procedures. YÖKAK also recommended that DEDAK institute a feedback process for all its documents and standards, open to everyone interested for inclusion, and for better ownership of DEDAK by all related parties. One final note was on the reviewer training to be held, YÖKAK recommended that the first training be given by an expert in the field once the standards are finalized, and stressed that the reviewer team should be the core of the accreditation process.

10.11 Conference on Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Language Learning: Bandırma, Turkey

DEDAK was invited to make a presentation at the conference on Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Language Learning in Bandırma, Turkey, in May 2018. This was another important event for DEDAK for several reasons. The most prestigious language program accreditation bodies, such as CEA (Commission on English Language Program Accreditation) and EAQUALS (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services), were invited to the conference to present their international accreditation schemes, and DEDAK was there among these bodies to also present their local accreditation scheme. This gave DEDAK a chance to reach out to a large and inclusively represented group and explain its aim, its procedures, and its future plans. This gave DEDAK a place within the wider accreditation world and the chance to reach out to people it otherwise would not have found altogether in one place. DEDAK gained new members during the conference, had a chance to talk to those interested, and answer any questions. In addition, the Executive Director of CEA stated their interest in supporting DEDAK as part of their strategic plan aims to support local accreditation bodies.

Thus, support from CEA has been a substantial contribution to DEDAK's progress. Also, the decision to apply for a grant from the US Embassy was a decision taken during the conference. The Regional English Language Officer of the US Embassy mentioned that DEDAK would be a very good candidate for a grant and suggested to apply when a new announcement was made.

10.12 CEA Support for DEDAK

Following the Bandırma conference, the DEDAK chair and Executive Director of CEA started to communicate about the possible support that CEA could provide to DEDAK. An agreement in two areas was reached. One was that the chair of DEDAK would attend the commission meetings in December 2018 as an observer. This opportunity would help the DEDAK chair to understand the structure of the meetings, how decisions are made and what to be aware of, when having similar meetings at DEDAK. The second area of support was given for the DEDAK's first reviewer training. The person giving these trainings for CEA also gave DEDAK's reviewer training, together with DEDAK's chair. This allowed DEDAK to set the standard for the trainings in terms of the tone, content, and messages given, with the support of an expert. It also helped the chair of DEDAK to learn from an expert, as they developed and organized the training and provided the training in cooperation.

In addition, DEDAK applied to the US Embassy for a grant in July 2018. The approval of the grant application in September 2018 was important in terms of finances needed for meetings and training. Until that date, DEDAK members and those involved had to pay all expenses on their own, as the membership fees were only enough for expenses such as payment for the virtual office, the accountant, the website, and so on. With the grant, DEDAK was able to hold meetings and trainings, and could also support participants to pay for their expenses.

10.13 YÖKAK's Quality Assurance Framework and DEDAK

While all of these activities were occurring with DEDAK, YÖKAK was working on a quality assurance scheme for English preparatory programs functioning under universities in Turkey. DEDAK's chair and two members were invited for a meeting to agree on the quality standards for these programs in Turkey. The meeting was held in June 2018. YÖKAK had asked the directors of six university English preparatory programs to work on the minimum quality standards for such programs. During the meeting, these standards were shared, and DEDAK also shared their standards to discuss and agree on common expectations. As expected, both parties had arrived at very similar standards. This new framework was developed in order to ask programs to undergo an annual self-assessment that would be submitted to YÖKAK, and undergo a site visit, as well as an external report every 5 years. The plan was to start with pilot programs to try out the framework and improve it through the experience and the feedback received through the pilot process. DEDAK got involved in this process as well because it was one of the parties contributing to the development of the standards by providing part of the reviewer training, as well as contributing

members to the reviewer team. This whole process strengthened DEDAK's relationship with YÖKAK and the members of the team working in the YÖKAK process. Moreover, the knowledge and experience gained through this process helped DEDAK members understand the local context, possible sensitivities, and the details of such a process much better.

10.14 A Milestone: The Twelfth Directors' Meeting in October 2018

In order to finalize the accreditation standards and share feedback, a task force of five members came together in İzmir for a 2-day meeting. This final meeting, the final of five such 2-day meetings, brought the standards to a point, where everyone felt comfortable sharing them. This version of the standards was shared with all members and directors of programs two months prior to the Twelfth Directors' Meeting, in order for all parties to be able to give feedback on the standards during the Directors' Meeting. The Twelfth Directors' Meeting, held in October 2018, became a showcase meeting for DEDAK, as it naturally became the focus of the meeting, and an area for stakeholders to show their support and interest. Here DEDAK found the opportunity to discuss improvements, the current status, and the plans for the near future. DEDAK also announced that it would conduct a focus group meeting with interested parties to receive feedback on the accreditation standards, and that it will start its first accreditation process with two pilot programs, one from a public and the other from a foundation university, and that it will begin receiving applications soon. The meeting also gave a chance for those interested to become members. Thus, many participants voiced their interest in being one of the pilot programs and becoming members of DEDAK during the meeting.

As a result of the new member applications in this Directors' Meeting, the number of DEDAK members reached 43, from 16 cities and 32 universities; 21 from public universities and 22 from foundation schools. This wide representation was one of the main aims of DEDAK from the beginning. In addition, the member structure represented a range of expertise in accreditation. Thus, all programs with CEA and EAQUALS accreditation were represented; there were nine CEA reviewers as members, including the former chair of CEA's commission. Also, a Board of Trustees member of EAQUALS was among the executive board members of DEDAK and the chair of DEDAK is an alumnus of the WSCUC Accreditation Assessment Leadership Academy. Furthermore, nearly all members have an educational background in educational sciences. Thus, all this expertise of the members has been one of the main strengths of DEDAK and has helped the organization develop in a positive direction.

10.15 Focus Group Meeting and the Finalizing of the DEDAK Accreditation Standards

The focus group meeting to finalize the standards was conducted in November in İstanbul. The 24 focus group members represented those with experience in accreditation, as well as those with none. There were also representations from different regions, program types, and expertise areas. All participants came to the full day meeting, having studied the standards in detail and having prepared their comments and feedback. The meeting aimed at getting feedback on both language and clarity, and on the content and the scope of each standard. It allowed DEDAK to review standards from varying perspectives and detect possible problem areas that they would not have been able to without the input of the participants. This final round of feedback gave the standards its final shape, and the first version of the standards was then released on the website as the 2019 DEDAK accreditation standards in January 2019. There were eight standard areas and 26 subheadings under the standard areas. The eight standard areas were as follows:

- Mission
- Curriculum
- Measurement and Evaluation
- Student Support Services
- Administrative Capacity
- Faculty
- Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies
- Continuous Improvement

10.16 DEDAK Reviewer Training and Pilot Program Selection

The reviewer training was held in İstanbul in December 2018. The reviewer trainers for the first DEDAK reviewer training were the CEA Accreditation Review Manager, and the chair of DEDAK. The two worked, designed, and delivered the training together. The participants of the training were either those who had already received YÖKAK's reviewer training and were on YÖKAK's first reviewer team or DEDAK members. Thirty-two participants attended the 2-day training.

Following the reviewer training, DEDAK was ready to start its first accreditation work with two pilot programs. The application process started in February 2019, and 14 programs submitted applications to be pilot programs that would go through the first accreditation process with DEDAK. The criteria of selection were based on the percentage and number of students in a program from English Medium Instruction departments, and in case of a tie, the year of the university's establishment would be the secondary criteria. The first pilot programs were announced in March 2019 and the process will start in May 2019.

10.17 Final Reflections

As is the case with almost all accreditation boards, DEDAK's foundation has not been free from challenges. From its infancy to present day, DEDAK have faced many difficulties, from legal status to membership structure, from funding to interpersonal conflicts, both internally and externally. Several times, the task force members came to the point of nearly giving up. However, it is the unwavering dedication of its members for the cause that kept the initiative moving forward. The significance of DEDAK for the profession and the accountability of their charge always kept the task members focused to, and when necessary, realigned to, their mission. The goal has always been one: to establish a national accreditation board whose standards are developed, implemented, and evaluated by the field with widespread representation. Without the voluntary efforts of those involved, the current status of DEDAK would not have been achieved, for such a process requires substantial amount of time, effort, and personal financial investment. DEDAK was fortunate to have a group of individuals who were knowledgeable and possessed the necessary leadership skills to accomplish the task assigned to them, but perhaps more importantly, have the willingness and dedication to do so.

With an initiative of such scale comes, inevitably, the obstacles along the way—politics, bureaucracy, rotation of members, as well as disagreements among members and with outside bodies. These at times slowed DEDAK down, but never stopped DEDAK. It also deserves mention that establishing an accreditation board is a lengthy process due to the time-consuming nature of stakeholder buy-in and government approval. Expecting immediate outcomes in a couple of years, especially for an initiative that is solely run by volunteers, is optimistic, if not naïve. The DEDAK learning from all of these lessons is that concentration on the work and avoiding distractions by external factors are key, but monitoring trends and issues that would affect its development, such as the local context, any government body instrumental for authorization, and the feedback from the stakeholders, are also essential.

What makes all these efforts worthwhile is the organic development of such an accreditation body. It gives the opportunity to those in the field, and to self-regulate such an effort and to develop standards for the local context, considering the special circumstances, needs, and dynamics of that environment. Accreditation organizations like DEDAK are inherently not top-down created initiatives but start at the very bottom, with the engagement of those who are involved and are affected by any standard that is set. Thus, the ownership from stakeholders comes naturally, and it develops as a collaborative and inclusive process to the benefit of all.

The strengths of DEDAK in coming to this stage have been several. Primarily, the expertise of its members in accreditation and quality assurance in education is noteworthy, since almost all members of the task force had previous experience with accreditation to a certain degree. Among the members are CEA commissioners and a one-time Commission Chair, CEA site-reviewers, EAQUALS Board of Trustees Member, alumnus of the WSCUC Accreditation Assessment Leadership Academy, and many others, who were actively involved with their own program's accreditation. DEDAK undoubtedly has been the most competent group of people in Turkey in the

field of quality assurance and accreditation, and this accumulated know-how provided DEDAK with the expertise needed at the initial stages. Secondly, DEDAK prevailed despite many changes in board structures, including, but not limited, to the inaugural chair, thanks to the perseverance and dedication of this group. At all stages, the transition was smooth and the efforts continued seamlessly. Also, it has been because of its members' prudence that DEDAK was able to avoid all possible commercial influences and the effects of political instabilities at times. This was made possible because the founding members adopted the ethos of financial and administrative independence to protect DEDAK from undue influence from external entities.

Another strength has been in reaching out to all stakeholders and balancing the representation of all regions and university types. Inclusiveness is one of the values of DEDAK but this is easier said than done at times. This is particularly true because of the widespread fear that the aim of accreditation is to control and impose uniformity. This was one of the challenges for DEDAK, which, at the end, actually became a strength. It took many meetings and outreach initiatives to communicate that this initiative's aim is actually to protect programs and professionals in the field; to recognize that excellence takes many forms and that these differences are what make us better and stronger. As Sahlberg (2007) argues, trust is a very important component in promoting quality, and DEDAK focused on building this trust in all its phases. There is now wide representation of many regions in Turkey, and the public and foundation universities are represented equally.

10.18 From Here

All said and done, it has been worth all the effort. In order for DEDAK to be recognized by YÖKAK, it needs to meet all the criteria set out by YÖKAK, and all the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area—ESG (2015) as referred to by YÖKAK (2019) in its documents.

Thanks to these efforts, DEDAK is meeting most of these requirements and standards, and is now at the stage for the establishment of a commercial enterprise as required by YÖKAK. Then with the formation of all necessary subcommittees, it will be ready to submit a file with all the documents for recognition by YÖKAK, and to begin its accreditation efforts in full across Turkey.

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Part III
Best Practices for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education

Chapter 11
CPD and Accreditation of EFL Programs: A Quasi-Symbiotic Relationship

Ian Collins and Bahar Gün

Abstract Few question the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) in trying to promote quality in education. After all, teachers are the most significant factor in ensuring quality, but it is notoriously hard to identify and evaluate good teachers empirically. Therefore, CPD is of significant importance to an institution seeking to provide education of the highest caliber. At the same time, many institutions struggle to provide effective CPD. They may, for instance, feel that they lack the necessary budget or do not have the requisite institutional culture to embrace the concept of continual improvement. This article looks at how using the framework of a formal accreditation scheme can help institutions set up and run CPD as a means of promoting quality. It identifies a quasi-symbiotic relationship between accreditation and CPD and uses the experiences of two programs that successfully went through educational accreditations to demonstrate that there is a mutually reinforcing link between an accreditation process and the development of an effective culture of CPD within an institution.

11.1 Introduction

There is a story, probably apocryphal, of a finance director of a company complaining to the chief executive about the size of the training budget. The finance director asks, "What if we invest in developing our people and then they leave us?" The chief executive replies, "What happens if we don't [invest in developing them] and they stay?" This neatly sums up a dilemma for the leaders of all organizations: Continuing professional development (CPD) of staff is time-consuming and expensive. Moreover, the time, energy, and money invested do not necessarily guarantee good results, nor stop staff from leaving, having been trained. Yet the alternative scenario

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_11

of simply not investing in CPD is almost certainly even worse. In an increasingly knowledge-based economy, leaders know that the quality of their staff is fundamental to the achievement of organizational goals. However, CPD can be a nebulous concept, and many millions of dollars and working hours are wasted by organizations all over the world, because the need for CPD is accepted, but its implementation is unfocused through poor analysis of precisely what CPD is needed, and how it can be most effectively delivered.

Even though it is likely most organizations involved in the provision of English language education understand very well the importance of CPD, in reality they face a similar dilemma. Having good quality teachers is obviously fundamental to the success of students, and therefore all educational institutions. A large body of research has confirmed what most of us intuitively feel: A teacher is responsible for the largest differentials between the performances of students, once differences between students have been controlled (Daley, Kim, & National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), 2010). Yet, it is difficult to identify good teachers in the hiring process. It is also challenging to evaluate teachers so that those performing well, and those not so well, can be empirically identified. CPD, therefore, becomes an important tool in helping ensure the teachers perform at an acceptable level. With that said, it is easy to state that CPD is important. It is much more difficult to implement it effectively, as will be outlined below.

Nevertheless, CPD appears as an important institutional requirement in a number of educational accreditation schemes. Accreditation has developed into a key factor in educational quality assurance in recent times, and English language education is no exception. There are a number of leading international accreditors, such as the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) and the European Association for Quality Language Services (EAQUALS), as well as national organizations, for example in Turkey, the newly-founded DEDAK. The raison d'être of such schemes is to promote educational excellence through the objective assessment of institutions' compliance with agreed standards, thereby giving an assurance of quality. One of the important measures in such quality assurance is the extent to which an organization undertakes self-assessment and continuing education, and it is a requirement of all the leading accreditation schemes that there is provision of CPD.

Taking these issues into account, we argue that there is a quasi-symbiotic relationship between CPD and accreditation. In other words, the true ethos of accreditation cannot exist without CPD; and systematic provision of CPD is often facilitated by the structure provided by accreditation. We will firstly review relevant literature on CPD in education, and English language teaching specifically, as well as the difficulties of hiring and evaluating teachers. We will also examine broad themes concerning educational accreditation, and review what a number of leading schemes require in terms of CPD. We will then set out our experiences of how the domains of CPD and accreditation have interacted in our respective institutions. Finally, we will offer our conclusions and recommendations about how best to use accreditation to support the provision of effective CPD in an institution.

11.2 CPD and Educational Quality

As noted in the introduction, effective teachers matter. Significant variation in the effectiveness of teachers has been measured, even amongst those in the same school (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2003; Hanushek, Kain, O'Brien, & Rivkin, 2005; Rockoff, 2004). There is little doubt, therefore, that it is important teachers have the necessary skills to be effective.

Moreover, research has shown the importance of CPD to the English language teaching profession (Borg, 2015; Day, 1999; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Wyatt, 2016). Teaching as a profession is considered to be intertwined with learning. As Wyatt (2016) suggests, "teaching is a learning profession" (p. 3). It is agreed that teachers need constant training and development in order to maintain long-term achievement (Richards & Farrell, 2005). One central component for any attempt to improve education is high-quality professional development (Guskey, 2002).

CPD not only helps teachers to be more effective generally but also enhances collaboration and creates institutional know-how that means knowledge can be preserved even if individuals leave. On a personal level, as well as gaining additional skills, effective CPD can empower teachers, lead them into fulfilling specialisms, and make them more flexible and tolerant, and thereby more susceptible to further development in the future.

The importance of CPD can also be put into stark relief when the difficulties of identifying effective teachers are considered. Firstly, it is very hard to discern teacher effectiveness from qualifications, an interview, or even from a demonstration lesson. Staiger and Rockoff (2010), for example, note that school leaders have limited ability to spot effective teachers during the hiring process, as evidenced by the empirical data available, showing how effectiveness differs amongst teachers in the same school. Teacher qualifications, in particular, correlate weakly with measured effectiveness (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010). In other words, hiring is a perilous task.

Secondly, once in the institution, it is also problematic trying to identify good teachers through performance evaluations. Research has shown school principals can often spot the best and the worst, but that leaves the majority in the middle, about whom there is limited knowledge (Jacob & Lefgren, 2008). Daley et al. (2010) also make the point that performance evaluations often do not focus on specific areas, where improvements in teaching could be made, which leads inevitably to a lack of improvement even if deficiencies are identified. Unless there is a comprehensive performance evaluation system, which includes classroom observations and careful follow-up of issues identified, very few teachers are going to get better just by doing what they normally do.

In the light of the difficulties outlined above, an effective CPD system can be a way, firstly, to help identify development needs amongst teachers, and secondly, to provide the means through which these improvements can be achieved. However, training budgets are often tight or nonexistent. Moreover, teaching is a profession that encompasses myriad competencies, meaning there can be no "one size fits all"

solution. It can also be challenging to identify development needs. Finally, as Fullan (2003) notes, the organizational behavior of teachers is notoriously difficult to change. Nevertheless, there are ways in which cost-effective CPD provisions can be made by institutions, and accreditation is one way in which this can be facilitated.

Before turning to the subject of accreditation, however, there is one further point that can be made about CPD generally. This concerns teacher beliefs and the organizational culture of an institution. As with most other professions, standards are in constant flux, new methodologies are developed, student needs change, contexts develop. The corollary of this is that to remain effective, teachers are obliged to develop lest they go from being effective to becoming ineffective. Nevertheless, at an individual level, teachers quickly gain experience during their early years and reach a level of skill at which they then plateau. If they are not careful, the fact that they feel comfortable with what they are doing and are experienced dealing with students, leads them to neglect professional development. As such, they may become what Kruger and Dunning (1999) have termed "unskilled and unaware of it" (p. 1121). They believe themselves to be effective teachers, but the very fact that they have not done any or much professional development means they are unable adequately to assess their own skill level, leading them to have an erroneously inflated sense of their own ability. This is corrosive for them personally, and also for the institution.

We seek to extend the ideas of Kruger and Dunning to encompass the institution itself. It is thus posited that owing to the lack of any institutional CPD culture, institutions often continue in their comfort zone, blissfully unaware of developments in the field, thereby becoming progressively unable to identify their own shortcomings (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). An institution that does not encourage and facilitate CPD is one in which many teachers may fall into the trap of believing themselves more than capable of doing a good job without professional development. Collectively, they develop a sense of "doing just fine" such that the institution itself fails to invest in good quality CPD. Accreditation is one way to help break that cycle.

11.3 The Relationship Between Accreditation and CPD

Trow (1996) convincingly argues that the growth of educational accreditation in the US was largely a response by educators to try to keep federal regulation at arm's length. Developments in Europe followed a quite different path, with the Bologna declaration in 1999 setting out, amongst other things, a plan for higher education quality assurance across the continent (ENQA, 2014). Rather than keeping governments out, the driving force was to protect students from low-quality institutions seeking to take advantage of increased student mobility following the implementation of the Bologna protocols (Schwarz & Westerheijden, 2004, cited in Stensaker, 2011). Yet whatever the reason for its development, accreditation has been an increasingly critical factor in quality assurance in higher education all over the

world for more than two decades (Stensaker, 2011). It is also now a critical part of institutions' recruitment of students in a globalized world.

In describing their mission, accrediting bodies typically refer to "quality" and "standards." The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) website, for example, speaks of advancing standards and promoting excellence, as well as assuring quality using an objective process (CEA, n.d.). The European Association for Quality Language Services (EAQUALS) speaks of fostering excellence, developing quality standards, and accrediting institutions against these standards (EAQUALS, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Others have characterized educational accreditation as more akin to setting a quality threshold or demonstrating fitness for purpose (Harvey, 2002, 2004).

Whatever one's view of accreditation, however, it is clear that one of the intentions of accrediting bodies is that their schemes are used as frameworks for self-improvement by institutions. This is fundamental to the ethos of all the major accrediting agencies, which require institutions to demonstrate their policies and procedures for continual review and strategic development. Despite some criticism that accreditation often does not actually result in educational improvement in many instances, some commentators have noted the benefits of institutions going through an extended period of self-study, as required by most accrediting bodies (Fertig, 2007). Moreover, accreditors generally do not prescribe specific implementations that are necessary to meet a defined standard. So, for example, while the CEA requires some system of staff performance evaluation to be in place, the precise form that this system should take is not specified. Instead, institutions must consider the standard in question, together with any commentary linked to it, and then find an appropriate way to conform. This means that from an educational innovation perspective, accreditation adopts neither what Fullan (2003) describes as a fidelity approach nor a mutual adaptation approach (it neither prescribes 100% compliance to a given system, nor does it allow adaptations to fundamental requirements to take account of local context). Instead, accrediting bodies offer a framework of more or less detail, depending on the particular standard in question.

This links to one more potential benefit of going through an accreditation and relates to one of the fundamental problems associated with any educational innovation: Changing the beliefs and values of teachers to ensure changes are long-lasting. The research of Rowan and Miller (2007) indicates that more pronounced changes are found when external experts have greater control over an implementation. In the case of an accreditation, the accrediting body's directions in the form of written standards and commentaries act as "experts" in this sense. Guskey (2002) makes the compelling claim that the beliefs and values of teachers will only really change when they have seen an innovation working in their own context. Accreditation could, therefore, help bring about genuine cultural change in an institution if innovations can be seen to have had a positive effect. Our research in this regard gives qualified support to the idea that accreditation can have a positive effect on teachers' attitudes to and demand for CPD, for example (Collins, 2015). This lends credence to our overall thesis of a quasi-symbiotic relationship between CPD and accreditation, to which we shall return below.

What is not in doubt is that leading accrediting bodies involved in English language program accreditation view CPD as an important part of an institution's compliance with their standards. In the CEA's Faculty Standard 2, for example, teachers are required to "demonstrate an ongoing commitment to professional development" (CEA, 2014). The commentary for that standard goes on to state that "CPD enhances and complements relevant teaching experiences and ensures faculty continue to have the knowledge and skills to perform effectively" (CEA, 2014). As part of the verification of this standard, the institution must document the CPD activity of all faculties to demonstrate their required commitment. Moreover, the institution is itself responsible for CPD: Administrative and Fiscal Capacity Standard 4 requires that the "program … defines, encourages, and supports appropriate professional development activities for faculty, administrators, and staff" (CEA, 2014). Again, the institution must demonstrate how it complies with this requirement in practice. EAQUALS similarly requires that there is a "formal framework to assure appropriate continuous professional development for all staff." This is one of the 12 quality standards required by EAQUALS under Staff Profile and Development (www.eaquals.org).

The Turkey-based English language program accreditor, DEDAK, states in its standards relating to teaching staff that the "language program plans and conducts in-service trainings and professional development activities" (DEDAK, n.d.). In all cases, institutions must show how they comply with the standards relevant to the provision of CPD, providing evidence that it is done in practice. For teachers in such an accredited program, there is no possibility that they can opt out of doing CPD—the program must not only give evidence that its staff are undertaking it but also demonstrate how the institution supports them in this regard. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that all CPD recorded is of the highest quality. Nor does it guarantee that all teachers in an accredited program are genuinely developing themselves to their highest capacity. Nevertheless, accrediting schemes are ensuring CPD is part of the institution, and we would contend that this makes it considerably easier to develop a culture of teachers doing CPD. Finally, for those institutions struggling to get resources to provide or facilitate CPD, the requirements to do so in order to become accredited provide strong arguments against the holders of purse strings who may otherwise be tempted not to fund CPD. Since accreditation is often a gateway and marketing tool for attracting students, funding CPD becomes a quid pro quo of the initiative.

As we have seen from a review of the literature, it is difficult to identify good teachers at the hiring stage. It is even difficult to identify them with performance evaluation systems. Yet teacher quality is fundamental to the success of students. CPD is therefore a critical way to try to ensure quality in an institution. Moreover, without a formal system of CPD in place, programs run the risk of falling into an institutional Kruger Dunning mindset, in which they do not even appreciate the problems of not doing CPD. Accreditation schemes can provide a framework for ensuring CPD is done. Moreover, Rowan and Miller (2007) offer some support for the idea that there may be a higher chance of teachers accepting the need for CPD if it is mandatory and they see how it can be beneficial in practice. Since the major

accrediting agencies in the English language teaching field all require a formal system to ensure CPD is done, institutions are forced to make sure CPD opportunities are facilitated and that teachers take part. While not perfect, this does play a part in fostering a culture of CPD. This leads to the quasi-symbiosis of our original thesis: Accreditation can be used to stimulate CPD; a culture of CPD means that the fundamental ethos of accreditation (self-evaluation, development, trying always to adopt the best practices in the field) can be supported in an institution. This circularity drives a perpetual desire to do things better for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Having looked at the issue from a theoretical perspective, the next section discusses our experiences of having gone through accreditation processes and how this impacted on CPD.

11.4 Learnings

The authors' institutions undertook international accreditations with different agencies (CEA and EAQUALS) around 2010. By 2011, both had become amongst the first Turkish institutions to achieve international English language program accreditation. As we have seen above, both CEA and EAQUALS make various stipulations about CPD and in complying with the applicable standards, both of our institutions needed to reflect on current practices with regard to CPD, and make adjustments to be compliant.

One of the authors' programs had what could be considered an ad hoc system of CPD prior to accreditation. While there was a vague expectation that CPD be done by faculty, there were no formal policies or procedures in place, nor was there a written job description in which any duty to undertake CPD could have been stated. Moreover, there was no formal budget for training or for otherwise supporting teachers to conduct CPD. As a result, while many teachers did from time to time attend conferences, training was mostly limited to occasional visits by publishers who would present textbooks and often add on some training seminars as an incentive to purchase a title. CPD undertaken was not logged by the institution, nor were the outcomes of workshops or seminars ever analyzed. It would be unfair to characterize the program as suffering from the type of institutional Dunning Kruger syndrome outlined above—the fact that it decided to go through a lengthy self-study as part of an international accreditation is proof of the fact that it wanted to improve and develop. However, there was a certain inertia and lack of focus that meant the institution did little to ameliorate the lack of effective CPD provision. Plans to improve were lost along the way as the management got distracted, fire-fighting more short-term problems.

As soon as the self-study process commenced, CPD was identified as an area of weakness by the Self-study Committee and plans were put in place to bring the program into compliance. Job descriptions and a faculty handbook were drafted to help comply with other standards. These provided channels for communicating clearly to faculty that CPD was expected. Moreover, other standards required a

formal performance evaluation system. Hitherto the program had never conducted even informal appraisals with faculty or staff. While putting together a robust performance evaluation procedure, the need to link appraisals clearly to CPD was recognized. As a result, a review of CPD undertaken was made a formal part of the appraisal process. This meant all CPD completed needed to be recorded and a system for doing so was introduced. A tariff of what qualified as relevant CPD was also devised. Within a few months, the program had gone from having no policy of any kind relating to CPD, to having the requirement to do CPD incorporated into job descriptions and a faculty handbook (which themselves became part of the terms and conditions of employment by the institution). CPD was made a criterion for performance evaluation, and action plans developed for each teacher following their appraisal identified CPD that may be required to address areas for development. An administrative office was also set up to deal with CPD matters.

Many of these administrative steps could be taken at reasonably short notice. However, while there was from this point "a system" on paper, effecting real change was a longer-term project. As the self-study period went on, the institution tried to identify what CPD it could offer teachers. While still struggling with a lack of budget for training, it worked with publishers to increase the amount of workshops they provided. In addition, the institution sought to tap into its own expertise and teachers from the program began to give seminars and workshops to the faculty, which were very popular and successful according to the formal feedback recorded. The institution also systematically began to publicize upcoming external CPD opportunities, such as conferences in the region and any other events taking place that could be worthwhile. By having a clear policy and more focused strategy, it also managed to find ways to get specialist training for teachers, such as for those working in the testing and assessment office.

Going through the self-study and using the framework provided by the standards was enormously helpful in developing policies and plans for future development. The successful accreditation decision also had an ancillary benefit: Respect from the upper management of the university. The institution leveraged this by obtaining a formal training budget. This enabled it to, amongst other things, fund the training of several teacher trainers who went on to augment the newly-established CPD office. Now, it was possible to perform developmental and evaluative class observations, provide in-house workshops and extensive training courses, as well as better identify teacher needs. The institution also established itself as a training center for a US-based English language teaching certificate course and many faculty members have since graduated with an internationally-recognized teaching certificate, which could be offered to them free of charge.

In a case study examining the changes in organizational culture that occurred as a result of the accreditation, CPD was mentioned by many of the interviewees as an area where cultural change was felt to have taken place. If CPD was withdrawn from the program, it was felt teachers would object (Collins 2015). Of course, the CPD system now in place is not a panacea. The quality of CPD is not uniform, nor do all teachers do as much as they should. There remain issues with the observation and performance evaluation system, and we cannot rely 100% that all development

issues are even identified, let alone solved through targeted CPD. However, great strides have been made and the experience has helped the institution keep on the path of continual development. This is the essence of what the accrediting agency wants from the institutions it accredits, yet it took setting out on the accreditation journey to kick start it.

The other program was somewhat luckier in that they already had a well-established Teacher Development Unit (TDU) and a performance evaluation system in place before it applied for accreditation. The school had a designated TDU webpage, including the mission statement and a list of the variety of in-house CPD activities offered to the teachers by the TDU, which consisted of four teacher trainers. Among those activities were workshops and seminars, class observations, short courses, SIGs, and so-called swap-shop sessions.

Going through the accreditation process, however, the TDU came to realize that great importance was attached to peer-observation, in addition to the observations carried out by the teacher trainers. After the program received accreditation, more emphasis was placed on peer observations, and the teachers in the program were encouraged to conduct more such observations.

Another important learning from the accreditation experience for the second program was related to the performance evaluation system. As noted above, appraisals are very closely linked to professional development. At the time, when the program was going through the accreditation process, there was no CPD component in its existing performance evaluation system. After it was accredited, it was once more confirmed that professional development was a vital part of a successful language program. The program management, then, revised their performance evaluation system and included CPD as a critical component in the system alongside teaching, professionalism, and student feedback. This part required all teachers to engage in some of the CPD activities offered by the TDU. That is, the teachers were expected to collect a certain number of points by attending the CPD activities offered (based on what they had identified as their own professional needs).

The experience of the second program provides another significant example of how an accreditation experience can impact a language program in a positive way by encouraging it to revise its existing systems to increase quality.

Both programs experienced positive benefits of going through their respective accreditations from a CPD perspective, as described above. Several years having elapsed since they were both initially accredited, it is now also possible to make some tentative conclusions on whether or not these gains have been sustainable. Overall, both programs report that, while empirically assessing fundamental shifts in institutional culture may be problematic, in practice, both have formalized systems in place ensuring comprehensive CPD is conducted in both programs.

One of the programs has continued with its accreditation and in fact was reaccredited in 2016. As part of its continuing obligations, CPD remains of fundamental importance to the program, with teachers taking part in professional development activities as a matter of course. While it is difficult to assess the direct impact of this on classroom teaching in an environment of continual improvement in many areas, it is notable that teachers do not now have to be “pushed” into doing CPD, and that

the quality of in-house CPD given by teachers to their colleagues has risen in quality. Moreover, program administrators report through the performance management system that teachers want, expect, and take part in CPD regularly. All these things suggest a long-term transformation has occurred. On a more anecdotal level, in the last seven or eight years, many teachers in the program have also published research and/or been very active in professional associations, which was almost unheard of before accreditation. Of course, the acid test would be to sustain this without the framework of accreditation. Yet one of the tangible strengths of accreditation is that it is neither too rigid nor flexible. It does impose certain burdens (principally from an administrative perspective), but after what may be an initial shock for some, once achieved and with systems in place, it is easy to continue within the set boundaries laid down by the accrediting body without it adversely impacting on the daily life of the program. A program that went through accreditation just to obtain the certificate may not experience such sustainable benefits. However, as most accreditors are at pains to point out, the real benefits of the process come from how deeply a program understands and engages with the ethos of accreditation as a route to self-improvement.

The upper administration of the other program chose not to apply for reaccreditation following the expiry of its initial term. Despite this decision, the TDU managed to sustain the ongoing benefits of the initial accreditation process. Even though the formal accreditation lapsed, the TDU continued to offer the same, and even more, developmental activities, including the "peer observations" recommended by the EAQUALS inspectors in their verdict letter. Peer observations, as an example, were included in a variety of teacher development projects in the years following the accreditation.

Over the years following the accreditation, the TDU never ceased to reflect on their activities to improve their in-service training program and to seek new paths for the professional development of the trainers in the team. Their ultimate aim has always been to be able to serve the teachers they work with to the best of their abilities.

Regarding the performance evaluation system, similarly, professional development continued as a key component in the appraisals; more and more teachers were encouraged to engage in professional learning for their own development, although there was arguably no more "stress" inflicted by a mandatory accreditation. It was rather impressive to see the increase in quality of the CPD activities in the program despite the lack of reaccreditation.

11.5 Conclusion and Recommendations

Our thesis is that CPD and accreditation have a quasi-symbiotic relationship. It has been our experience that going through an accreditation process has been very beneficial in developing a system and culture of CPD in our respective institutions. Moreover, CPD is fundamental to the principles of a good quality accreditation

body. It is anticipated that each accredited institution will develop a culture of continual self-analysis and development, always looking to see how a program can be better for all its stakeholders. In that sense, accreditation is far more than a certificate of compliance or indication of reaching a minimum standard of quality or fitness for purpose. In that way, CPD is integral to making accreditation a success. Yet, developing a culture of CPD in an institution that has not always had one is challenging. Using the framework of an accreditation is one way to help develop such a culture. In that sense it could be said that the somewhat "top-down" nature of accreditation is leading cultural change, but once developed, that culture will help reinforce the principles on which the ethos of accreditation rests.

Accreditation is not necessarily desirable or available for all programs for myriad reasons. However, the same effects can be achieved using a well-developed set of values and strategic objectives. It requires the will and resources to go through a long-term plan which may take years to bring to fruition. However, every program has the ability to develop a CPD culture. In doing so, it will develop the values for which accrediting bodies are looking. Lack of budget is not necessarily fatal, and there is no one perfect system. However, establish a formal system and implement it with gusto and a cultural change in the institution may well follow.

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Chapter 12
Learning Outcomes: Core Issues in Higher Education

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Abstract Harmonisation in the European Higher Education Area is the main objective of the Bologna Declaration of 1999. One of the most important issues is the paradigm shift from traditional faculty-centered teaching to student-centered teaching and learning by focusing on the intended learning outcomes. Learning outcomes on programme and on module/course level provide a useful guide to inform potential candidates and employers about the general and subject-specific qualifications that a graduate will possess. The internationally agreed European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education assures the same level of study programmes and modules, which must be oriented towards learning outcomes. Learning outcomes therefore have to be assessed. Those assessments are challenging in particular to the teachers, since they have to take care for appropriate formats of assignments and consistency between the learning outcomes, the learning and teaching activities, and assessment procedures (constructive alignment). The contribution contents some international examples of good practice.

12.1 The Bologna Context

Twenty-nine European ministers of education convened in Bologna on 19th of June 1999 and signed the so-called Bologna Declaration. The ministers agreed to reach the following objectives, which they considered to be of primary relevance in order to establish the European area of higher education and to promote the European system of higher education worldwide:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the diploma supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system.

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_12

- Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of 3 years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries.
- Establishment of a system of credits—such as in the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)—as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility.
- Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to:
  - For students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services
  - For teachers, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights.
- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regard to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.

Among these objectives to be reached in a harmonised European Higher Education Area (EHEA), learning outcomes are not explicitly mentioned. But in order to reach, for example, the objective of promoting student mobility and the objective to promote European citizens' employability, learning outcomes are crucial elements as indicators and confirmation of adequate—and equivalent—qualifications and competences, reached at the successfully completed respective academic education. Therefore, the ministers in the Bucharest Communiqué (2012) emphasised:

> "To consolidate the EHEA, meaningful implementation of learning outcomes is needed. The development, understanding and practical use of learning outcomes is crucial to the success of ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance – all of which are interdependent. ...We call on institutions to further link study credits with both learning outcomes and student workload, and to include the attainment of learning outcomes in assessment procedures." (EHEA Ministerial Conference Bucharest, 2012)

12.2 Learning Outcomes Defined

Learning outcomes mark significantly the paradigm shift from traditional, teacher-oriented teaching and learning in pre-Bologna times towards student-oriented teaching and learning. There is a cartoon, which may nicely demonstrate the spirit of this paradigm shift from teaching to learning.

There are different definitions/descriptions of learning outcomes, such as:

- Describe what a student is expected to know, understand, apply, analyse, describe… and/or be able to demonstrate at the end of a study programme (on a more general level) and at the end of each module (on a more detailed level) and thereby the qualifications and competences to be achieved.
- Help academic staff to focus on what they want students to achieve in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, implementing the 'Bologna process paradigm shift' from teacher-oriented teaching to student-centered teaching and learning.
- Provide a useful guide to inform potential candidates and employers about the general and subject-specific knowledge and understanding that a graduate will possess (important for the labour market, i.e. employability of graduates). Therefore, they have to be assessed.

12.3 National Qualifications Framework and Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area

> National qualifications frameworks encompass all education qualifications – or all higher education qualifications, depending on the policy of the country concerned – in an education system. They show what learners may be expected to know, understand and be able to do on the basis of a given qualification (learning outcomes), as well as how qualifications within a system articulate, that is, how learners may move between qualifications in an education system (ECTS, 2015, p. 73).

In different countries, there are different systems of education and training (structure of higher education institutions), different history and cultures of education (training system), and different levels of degrees for similar subjects and different needs (nursery may be trained at VET or at university level). These differences in Europe require a simple common denominator or common reference system for comparing, assigning and transparency. Therefore, the Bologna ministers agreed upon the so-called Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), which is an overarching European framework focussing on the levels of bachelor, master and PhD and aiming at:

- Increasing transparency in the European higher education systems
- Improving recognition of foreign qualifications

The ministers accepted the respective proposal developed by the Bologna Working Group in 2005 (Bologna Working Group, 2005). Thus, the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area is based on an intergovernmental agreement within the Bologna Process. The framework's aim is to organise national higher education qualifications into an overarching European-wide qualifications framework. Within this framework, qualifications are defined according to levels of complexity and difficulty. Generic descriptors of the requisite learning outcomes at each level have been defined by expert working groups within the Bologna Process. These descriptors are broadly applicable in all national contexts.

The QF-EHEA is oriented towards learning outcomes by using descriptors (see below) and emphasises that qualifications in higher education should be related to each other in a coherent way. The national frameworks (NQF) and their qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes. In the end, each NQF is the reference document regarding the required qualifications on different educational levels in higher education and must be aligned with the QF-EHEA.

Out of 48 signature states in 2017, 39 countries are cooperating on implementation of the European qualifications framework. Thirty-five countries have officially established or formally adopted their NQFs; four countries are still working on the design and/or the formal adoption of their NQFs (www.Cedefop.Europa.eu/projects/NQF).

12.4 International Regulations and Examples of Good Practices

Study programmes and modules (units/courses) in higher education must be oriented nationally towards learning outcomes, according to the NQF, as well as internationally, according to the QF-EHEA agreed qualifications to be achieved in BA, MA and PhD programs. National Qualifications Frameworks use to require and the QF-EHEA does require qualifications, which are oriented towards the respective programme level on internationally agreed descriptors. These denominators are the so-called Dublin Descriptors (Joint Quality Initiative, 2004) In detail, the Dublin Descriptors define internationally those qualifications that signify completion of the *first cycle (BA)* are awarded to students, who have achieved the following learning outcomes:

- Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and their general secondary education and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;

- Can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems in their field of study;
- Have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually in their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;
- Can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.

Qualifications that signify completion of the *second cycle (MA)* are awarded to students who:

- Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with bachelor's level and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context
- Can apply their knowledge and understanding and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study
- Have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information but that includes reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements
- Can communicate their conclusions and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously
- Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous

All learning outcomes must be defined and described on respective programme levels in general and on module (unit/course) levels in detail, expressed in terms of qualifications according to the NQF and the Dublin Descriptors, such as:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Applying knowledge and understanding
- Making judgements
- Communicate
- Learn to learn

In order to highlight the role and importance of learning outcomes for teachers, students and those who decide upon requirements of quality assurance assessments at the programme and module levels, there are a number of foundational pieces of information that should be conveyed.

12.4.1 How to Define Intended Learning Outcomes

Those who are responsible for definitions of learning outcomes and their assessment, e.g. module responsibles, deans, respective committees, etc. should follow the simple advice:

- Employ active verbs, such as those in line with Bloom's taxonomy (Kennedy, 2007); e.g., knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation
- Emphasise the teaching–learning–assessment–employability relationship

Based on its international experience in programme accreditation procedures, the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation/FIBAA notes the following example of good practice in defining intended learning outcomes at the programme level:

> The Bachelor of Arts in International Business of the University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, "aims at providing students with knowledge for management tasks and leadership roles in a multicultural entrepreneurial environment in either national or multinational companies. It is designed to focus on operation and exercises that help students gain practical experience in capitalising on global business opportunities. Upon successful completion of the programme, graduates will be able to:
>
> - Understand different types of global business strategies
> - Gain insights on international trade rules, regulations, and trends
> - Analyse human resources and labour policies and practices that impact working across borders
> - Apply risk management and hedging strategies to minimise the impact of foreign exchange markets on business decisions
> - Craft international market penetration and development strategies
> - Research supply chains management to identify dependencies and opportunities
> - Understand behaviours of business in different cultures, socio-economic and political environment
> - Develop skills and competences in strategic planning, decision-making and problem-solving
> - Develop a business mindset (FIBAA, 2017, p. 10)"

The intended learning outcomes have been assessed and appraised by the FIBAA experts in their accreditation assessment report as follows:

> "The International Business programme is designed to meet the knowledge and capabilities in decision-making that require an international background. The qualification objectives of the programme are in line with the National Qualifications Framework, approved on 18th of October, 2016, by the Prime Minister, and they take into account the requirements of the European Qualifications Framework, too. The principle "fitness of purpose" has obviously been followed. The objectives are explained and convincingly presented in relation to the target group, targeted professional field and societal context of the discipline. They embrace academic proficiency, comprehensive employability, as well as the development of the individual student's personality... (FIBAA, 2017, p. 10)

The course descriptions provide 'detailed information of intended learning outcomes and all the necessary information'", (FIBAA, 2017, p. 25) and will be assessed again by external experts at the end of the accreditation period.

Based on its international experience in programme accreditation procedures, FIBAA noted, for example, the following illustration of good practice in defining intended learning outcomes at the *module (unit/course) level*. As stated in the KIMEP University Executive Education Center's self-assessment report (KIMEP, 2017), "after successful completion of the Executive MBA programme of KIMEP, learners will be able to:

- Design, analyse and synthesize the business research.
- Analyse business theories, markets, and reporting practices in organisational development settings.
- Describe and analyse a simple circular flow model and the national accounts, the role of economics for organisation's success.
- Describe and synthesize the main concepts and describe issues of the modern financial systems including financial markets and financial institutions.
- Identify organisational, personal, cultural issues that impact on Ethics as leaders lead culturally diverse work teams to a success.
- Evaluate contemporary issues in Information Technologies/Management Information Systems (IT/MIS) and their impact on IT/MIS problems in an organisational setting.
- Describe the underlying concepts, techniques, analyses and methods by which the accounting functions support management decision-making.
- Describe and synthesize current investment decision-making methodologies of the organisation.
- Describe and analyse the relationship between operations and a competitive advantage in the marketplace.
- Describe and analyse the key concepts in strategic marketing and assess their relative importance.
- Describe and define the current trend of globalisation.
- Identify and synthesize strategic approach and applicability of the risk management.
- Synthesize, select and justify an appropriate business strategy, and use it in strategic audit of a company."

The intended learning outcomes have been assessed and appraised by the FIBAA experts in their accreditation assessment report as follows:

> "Module descriptions include course objectives, prerequisites, ECTS credit allocation, course content, testing methods and evaluation of student's performance, basics of the grading, and detailed teaching and assessment methods plus bibliographic and other resources and references to programme or university policies as necessary. The programme structure supports the smooth implementation of the curriculum and helps students to reach the defined learning outcomes. The programme consists of modules and assigns Credit-Points per module on the basis of the necessary student workload. The module descriptions provide detailed descriptions of intended learning outcomes and the information defined in the ECTS Users' Guide" (FIBAA, 2018, p. 23).

The intended learning outcomes will be assessed again by external experts at the end of the accreditation period.

When nationally or internationally accrediting those programmes, quality assurance agencies like FIBAA will check, whether the learning outcomes on the respective programme level as well as on module (unit/course) level are convincingly and transparently defined and described, following the already quoted Bucharest Communiqué, 'The development, understanding and practical use of learning outcomes is crucial to the success of ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance – all of which are interdependent' (2012, p. 3).

12.4.2 Challenges for Teachers

A paradigm shift in teaching: The introduction and the use of learning outcomes are necessarily linked to the adoption of student-centered teaching and learning. According to the description of the European Students' Union, it is a learning approach characterised by innovative methods of teaching which aims to promote learning in communication with teachers and students and which takes students seriously as active participants in their own learning, fostering transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical and reflective thinking (ECTS, 2015).

What does this mean? It means that a shift in the culture of teaching and learning in higher education is necessary for both teachers as well as students, but, indeed, more challenging for teachers. When the Bologna process started, teachers used to be already there. Then they had to accept the paradigm shift and to learn to change their attitude and style of teaching. This process is not easy and, in many countries, is yet to be completed. International experience shows that the greatest obstacle for successfully implementing the Bologna process has been the mentality of the faculty involved, which can create huge barriers. It took and takes great efforts on behalf of the deans and other responsible persons to convince or at least to persuade the respective faculty members to get involved. Table 12.1 illustrates this challenging paradigm shift for teachers:

Application of ECTS: The introduction and the use of learning outcomes is necessarily linked with an additional challenge: The application of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). ECTS is based on and has to be calculated transparently on learning outcomes and the learning process. ECTS is a quantified means of expressing the volume of learning, based on the achievement of learning outcomes and their associated workloads. In order to make it possible that students can successfully finish their studies in due time, their workload—needed to achieve the intended learning outcomes in due time—has to be fairly and appropriately calculated. The calculated workload must include all elements of study-related work, i.e. lectures, self-study, preparation for examinations, examinations, etc. The number of ECTS points linked to a module (unit) has to be first estimated and then—based on experience—calculated in relation to the respective intended learning outcomes.

Table 12.1 Lecture-oriented vs. student-oriented approaches (Wildt, 2009)

Lecturer-oriented teaching	Student-oriented teaching
Lecturer is the centre of attention	Student is the centre of attention
Transmission of information by the lecturer	Active knowledge acquisition by the student
The learning method is a general, firm and standardized one	There are different individual learning methods
Lecturer for the student	Student is self-controlling
Lecturer explains correct answers to the particular problems	Lecturer asks questions that students answer
Lecturer leads the learning process	Lecturer accompanies the learning process
Lecture room as workshop	Media library and group room as workshop
Static and invariable	Dynamic and variable
Lecturer and student stand opposite one another	Lecturer and student work together
Programme planning is adapted to the examinations	Programme planning is adapted to feedback
Student can isolate him/herself; turning up at will	Social competences gain importance
Lectures	Discussions
Assessment on the basis of an exam	Continuous assessment
Timetable	Programme plan

For the teachers, this challenge is, indeed, not easy to face, but it is necessary to be managed. At the beginning, they will estimate the time needed and define the workload based on their estimation. But after a while, e.g. after two years, they have to check, whether the estimated workload really meets reality and, if not, they have to adjust the students' workload accordingly. Thus, continuous evaluation of the workload is required. This is true for bachelor's programmes as well as for master's programmes. Ph.D. programmes may require some additional special learning outcomes like respective methodological approaches and may therefore offer respective modules linked with ECTS. It may be, but is not necessary.

Affiliation with diploma supplement: It is not by chance that the ministers stated in the Bucharest Communiqué, 'The development, understanding and practical use of learning outcomes is crucial to the success of ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance – all of which are interdependent' (2012, p. 3). The reason is very obvious. The Diploma Supplement is a document issued to all graduates of higher education institutions. It describes the qualification they have received in a standard format. The supplement contains among other information, contents and results gained such as:

- Programme requirements
- Programme details (e.g. modules or units studied)
- The individual grades/marks/credits obtained

Thus, the Diploma Supplement is the source of evidence, e.g. for employers regarding the achieved qualifications of applying graduates, the information about

the modules (units) studied and the respective achieved learning outcomes are of high value. Furthermore, the Diploma Supplement is also a valuable means of improving recognition of foreign qualifications.

12.4.3 Assessing Achieved Learning Outcomes

It is not by chance that the ministers stated in the Bucharest Communiqué, 'We call on institutions to further link study credits with both learning outcomes and student workload, and to include the attainment of learning outcomes in assessment procedures' (2012, p. 3). Learning outcomes are an integral part of outcome-focused approach to teaching, learning and, in particular, to assessment procedures. Experts call it 'constructive alignment', which means that teaching, learning and respective assessments are consistently oriented towards intended and—at the end—achieved learning outcomes. Achieved learning outcomes define the employability of the graduate. Vice versa: Intended learning outcomes must consider the demand of the labour market.

Therefore, in order to increase transparency of the achieved qualifications with regard to the national and international labour market (as well as to improve recognition of qualifications achieved at other HEIs), examinations should be structured in order to measure the achieved learning outcomes, e.g. differ between:

- Subject-specific competencies
  - Cognitive
  - Functional
- Generic competencies, e.g. problem-solving, computing, foreign languages, transfer skills, abstract thinking
- Social skills, e.g. communication, cooperation, conflict-solving
- Personal competencies, e.g. self-management, ethic attitude

In this context, it is most important for the assessors to define integrative assignments for assessments. Integrative assignments mean to define assignments, which cover all intended learning outcomes of the module (unit/course) in order to assess all achieved learning outcomes. That is indeed a great challenge for the assessors. Table 12.2 highlights the characteristics of the most common and appropriate assessments for measuring the respective learning outcomes.

Ultimately, quality assurance measures, that is evaluation and accreditation procedures, must consider to what extent assignments and types of examinations at the module (unit/course) level are really targeting and appropriate for measuring achieved learning outcomes.

One final remark is that the individually achieved learning outcomes will be assessed in any examination of the students. The learning outcomes themselves have to be updated on demand and in line with the development of the curriculum, when considering the employability of its graduates based on experience, feedback of stakeholders (employers) and aggregated statistical data.

Table 12.2 Common assessments for learning outcomes (Kopf, Leipold & Seidl, 2010)

Form of assessment	Characteristics
Presentation	• Subject-specific cognitive competence • Social skills
Oral examination	• Subject-specific cognitive and functional competence • Generic competence – social skills
Minutes	• Subject-specific cognitive competence • Generic competence
Thesis	• Subject-specific cognitive competence – Social skills (for teamworking)
Written examination	• Subject-specific cognitive and functional competence – Generic skills
Case study	• Subject-specific cognitive and functional competence – Generic skills – Social skills (for teamworking) – Personal competence
Multiple choice	• Subject-specific cognitive competence (knowledge)

12.5 Summary

Considering the already cited Bucharest Communiqué, it can be noted that in order to successfully implement learning outcomes on the programme and module (unit/course) levels, a higher education institution necessarily needs:

- The National Qualifications Framework as a reliable reference document
- National regulations supporting and facilitating the implementation
- Appropriate human resources who are:
  - Willing to accept the paradigm shift
  - Pedagogically competent
- Appropriate assignments (focussing at intended and achieved learning outcomes)
- Appropriate types of assessment, meeting the requirement of accurately measuring the intended learning outcomes
- Consistency between the learning outcomes, the learning and teaching activities, and assessment procedures (i.e., constructive alignment)
- Current intended learning outcomes, in line with the further development of the curriculum

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Chapter 13
Implementation of Curriculum and Assessment Accreditation Standards in an English Language Programme at a Saudi University

Abdullah Al-Bargi

Abstract This qualitatively based research study aimed at exploring the effective implementation of specific EFL accreditation standards of curriculum and student achievement within the context of a Saudi higher education institution. The study further aimed at investigating how the reality of educationally and socially constructed international EFL academic standards is applied in a human learning setting with a focus on the Saudi context. As such, the study sought to determine how the quality assurance scheme of the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) for curriculum and student achievement standards would be applicable across various EFL settings. Data was collected from public curriculum and assessment documents at the CEA-accredited English Language Institute's Preparatory Year English Program at King Abdulaziz University to ascertain the extent to which this programme is aligned to the CEA standards of curriculum and student achievement. Also, more data was collected concerning the ELI Mission and how it is designed to achieve what it states in terms of the implementation of CEA-required curriculum and assessment standards. The study concludes with the recommendation that carefully implemented, accreditation standards lead to quality English language education across cultures and different education systems.

13.1 Introduction

Quality performance assurance for English language programmes in Saudi Arabia has evolved relatively recently. The initial impetus of Saudi higher education towards standard setting started with the establishment of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) in 2004. King Abdulaziz University (KAU)'s strategic adoption of internationally standardized practices in

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_13

its programmes gained momentum in the early 2000s with the establishment of the Quality Assurance Unit. The unit was tasked with institutionalizing targeted policies in KAU to facilitate alignment of its academic programmes' operations with international higher educational and academic best practices. Accreditation by mostly US-based and UK-based internationally recognized accreditation agencies was formally adopted by KAU as an approved authority to aid in these endeavours, and KAU currently hosts 116 accredited academic programmes. KAU's drive for quality assurance and compliance with accreditation standards has helped to earn the university both national and international recognition and crucially created regional and local job market confidence in the quality of its graduates. The university's emphasis on *quality* has been part of a wider steadfast pursuit of *excellence*.

The English Language Institute (ELI) Preparatory Year English Language Program (PYELP) has been part of the exponential acceleration in the globalization, evolution, and adaption of the English language in higher education institutions worldwide, since the turn of the new millennium. KAU emphasizes the teaching of English language for its preparatory year students delivered by ELI to over 15,000 students a year, most of whom go on to colleges where English is the medium of instruction. It is the core of the ELI Mission to prepare students for their academic progress when they join their respective colleges after successfully completing the ELI PYELP.

In line with KAU strategic policy, ELI sought out an international accrediting agency specialized in the accreditation of English language programmes. After significant research and consideration, it was decided to approach the US-based Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) with a view to accreditation of the ELI PYELP. CEA is formally recognized by the US Department of Education (USDE) as the only accrediting agency for English language programmes in the United States. CEA is respected, recognized, and pre-eminent in the field. ELI, as a non-profit state-sponsored institution that receives no tuition fees from students, was under no obligation to seek accreditation but undertook this ambitious project on a voluntary basis in order to generate increased improvement impetus.

The ELI's CEA accreditation journey began in 2010 with the submission of an Accreditation Eligibility Report, followed by the Self-Study Report (SSR) and site visit in 2012, which culminated in ELI receiving the first full 5-year CEA accreditation in 2013. In 2017, ELI submitted its second SSR to CEA for re-accreditation. This was followed by a site visit, and subsequent confirmation by CEA that all its accreditation standards had been met successfully, on the basis of which ELI was granted full 10-year re-accreditation in 2018. As a CEA fully accredited institution, ELI meets its mission through rigorous and careful programme management and CEA standards implementation, including those of the key curriculum and student achievement standards.

Collecting, collating, and reporting data in addition to composing and gathering evidence for the SSR have had tangible benefits for the ELI PYELP in terms of inevitable spin-offs. First and foremost of these was the self-reflection and self-examination that the programme had to undergo which entailed a rigorous and transparent assessment of the effectiveness of the ELI PYELP operations, processes,

policies, and procedures. This, in and of itself, had a meaningful impact as it required in-depth introspection that not only identified areas in need of renovation and refocused effort but also pinpointed areas where prior endeavours had led to current programme strengths.

The benefit was particularly significant because the self-study process necessitated a multifaceted collaborative stakeholder-based approach. This meant considering the variety of evaluative perspectives from all ELI units and campuses in order to arrive at an evidence-based objective view of overall quality against CEA's standards.

During the self-study process, all aspects of the ELI PYELP were examined and appraised as to their efficacy in terms of mission achievement. Things that worked effectively were emphasized, and aspects that needed improvement were put under the spotlight and examined accordingly and perceived weaknesses dealt with.

The self-study process led to programme improvement, beneficial to all program stakeholders. CEA is an 'external' body and the 'external' nature of this review required all those involved in preparing the SSR to bear firmly in mind that the SSR was not for internal purposes, but that it was being prepared for an independent, internationally and USDE-recognized accrediting agency with proven impartiality and professional judgement. Hence, the quality and depth of all responses in the SSR required the utmost care and attention to detail in terms of narrative accuracy and supporting documentation.

In addition to the above, and in further support of its focus on quality and effective practice, ELI consults with some key players in the field such as Cambridge Assessment, the European Association for Quality Language Services (EAQUALS), and the Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE) on its academic policies, processes, and professional development to provide the optimal educational experience and service to both students and faculty. The 'thinking standards' culture has become prevalent in setting strategic planning goals. The ELI's internal quality assurance scheme ensures compliance with CEA standards through continuous programme review and evaluation. In tandem with these efforts, ELI also takes aim to actually exceed the standards' expectations by means of an ambitious and inspiring Strategic Plan.

ELI's compliance with and implementation of CEA accreditation standards have immensely contributed to its 'excellence' in teaching and learning, as evidenced by improved student achievement, demonstrated by consistent high pass rates measured by externally reviewed and validated exams.

13.2 Literature Review

The process of quality of English language teaching in the Saudi university preparatory year programmes has not always been without its shortcomings and challenges. There are a variety of constraints leading to a low English language proficiency level of newly admitted students into Saudi universities, including teaching and learning

style, pedagogical, and administration constraints (Al-Seghayer, 2014). This low level of English language proficiency following university admission has made: 'the policy makers in Saudi Arabia see the on-going need for preparatory English programs' (McMullen, 2014, p. 132). However, the issue of the assumption that tertiary-level students successfully completing their end-of-year EFL exams having mastered all relevant contents of the EFL course have been the subject of much scrutiny (Staub, 2017). In the Saudi context, the government has mandated that quality assurance and accreditation are both central to the operation of Saudi universities, and many universities have obtained or are working towards the accreditation of their academic programmes, including EFL programmes (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013).

This has been vital to enable the Saudi government to develop: 'its university system to world-class standard, increasing access to and participation in higher education across a range of traditional and non-traditional disciplines directly relevant to the future social and economic growth of the country' (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013, p. 1). Along these lines, the stakeholders and decision makers in Saudi educational tertiary institutions have long aimed at introducing the best internationally renowned quality system practices as well as examining a variety of approved educational approaches by adapting them to the Saudi context, while making the necessary changes (Darandari et al., 2009). As the number of Saudi students being admitted to universities increases year by year, and as the majority of those students are considered underachieving in English language (Elyas & Picard, 2018; Sulaimani & Elyas, 2018), the demand for accredited EFL programmes with evidence of high-quality contents is becoming a priority for Saudi universities' stakeholders (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

This conclusion requires aspiring successful preparatory year English language programmes at the tertiary level, in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere, to follow internationally recognized rigorous standards. In Saudi Arabia, the move towards quality education in EFL and other subjects has become even more pressing with the launch of the Saudi Vision 2030 to place the country as a leading nation encompassing three themes: a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation.

Globalization is evident in the increased mobility, multicultural, and multilingual diversity within the national borders and within a dynamic education represented by the population of teachers and students (Kuhlman & Knezevic, 2013). Higher education in Saudi Arabia now holds a distinctive position within Vision 2030 to develop both a local and global positioning strategy through a move towards internationally standardized practices embedded in accreditation standards. This move would work to support the strategic objectives of the Vision 2030's National Transformation Program, specifically Strategic Objective 4 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to 'develop quality standards and technical professional education'. This objective is directly linked to the relevant Vision 2030 Strategic Objective to 'provide citizens with knowledge and skills to meet the future needs of labour market' (National Transformation Program 2020, 2016, p. 55).

Saudi Arabia is embracing this globalization of future jobs by aiming to achieve a greater economic expansion and sustainable growth under Vision 2030 (Moshashai, Leber, & Savage, 2018). Vision 2030 has also placed a great deal of importance on the education sector in order to transform it into a dynamic, rich, diverse, and robust

educational system (Abouammoh, 2018). Furthermore, Vision 2030 strongly emphasizes privatization of selected government services, including 'independent public schools', and eventually universities, while retaining the supervisory role of the Ministry of Education.

This move ultimately dictates that all tertiary-level institutions will have to provide quality education in the face of a growing and competitive national educational market (Abouammoh, 2018). Accordingly, government and private universities throughout Saudi Arabia have been working tirelessly to successfully obtain national and international accreditation (Darandari et al., 2009; Noaman, Ragab, Madbouly, Khedra, & Fayoumi, 2017).

As English language proficiency has become a crucial skill for college graduates eyeing to work in an interconnected world, it is now a vital tool to successfully connect Saudi Arabia to the world. Researchers have, therefore, perceived a good command of English as a priority for global communication and working towards achieving various strategic programmes of Vision 2030 (Al-Zahrani & Rajab, 2017; Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017; Picard, 2018). As such, EFL learning and teaching in Saudi Arabia are considered a top priority at tertiary education institutions moving towards globalized education for a dynamic economy and mobility (Alanazi & Widin, 2016). Kuhlman and Knezevic (2013) assert that: 'EFLteaching is a multifaceted activity; it has several dimensions, and it must rise to the challenge of its enhanced responsibilities' (p. 2). However, EFL learning and teaching in the Saudi context have come up against several barriers to its successful implementation, including effective learning and teaching strategies and rigorous assessment informed by best practices (Al-Seghayer, 2015), EFL low achieving, high school learners (Alghamdi & Siddiqui, 2016), lack of general motivation among EFL learners (Al-Malki, 2018), EFL teachers' anxiety (Alrabai, 2015), context-irrelevant textbook contents (Al-Seghayer, 2015; Sulaimani, 2017; Sulaimani & Elyas, 2018), and concerns from both EFL teachers and students regarding assessment practices (Obeid, 2017).

Subsequently, EFL in the Saudi context is now witnessing a surge of momentum in terms of increased emphasis on quality assurance as well as achieving national and international academic accreditation (Almuhammadi, 2017). Similarly, the role of quality assurance and its implementation in all departments at Saudi universities has been mandated by the Ministry of Education, including English language institutes and centres (Elyas & Picard, 2018). ELI has striven to achieve excellence in its mission and has sought and gained recognition by the US-based Commission on English Language Program Accreditation.

13.3 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design with an interpretivist approach considering effective implementation of specific EFL accreditation standards of curriculum and student achievement within the context of a Saudi higher education institution. The emphasis of this approach is to provide a meaningful description

and understanding of the mechanism by which CEA-accredited programmes, especially large ones with over 15,000 learners and more than 600 teachers such as the ELI PYELP at KAU, implement the required curriculum and student achievement standards. Central to this chosen qualitative interpretivist approach is careful observation of the integration of best practices in English language teaching and learning with actual performance in large-scale EFL programmes.

The interpretivist approach utilizes a wide range of tools and measures to reach a meaningful understanding of the phenomenon being investigated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As the interpretivist approach draws on a subjective and socially constructed reality (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), this study uses this approach to investigate how the reality of educationally and socially constructed international EFL academic standards is applied in a human learning setting with particular focus on the Saudi context. In this sense, the methodology seeks to determine if the quality assurance scheme of CEA curriculum and student achievement standards would be applicable across cultures (Schindler, Puls-Elvidge, Welzant, & Crawford, 2015).

13.3.1 Data Collection

The study collects data from the ELI curriculum and assessment documents to investigate how they are aligned to the CEA standards of curriculum and student achievement. The first point of data collection is driven by the ELI Mission and how it is designed to achieve what it states in terms of the implementation of CEA-required curriculum and assessment best practices. Subsequently, additional data is collected from curriculum and assessment documents to be measured against CEA-required practices.

13.3.2 What Is CEA?

CEA is a specialized accrediting agency that focuses on post-secondary intensive English language programmes and institutions. CEA's purpose is to provide a systematic approach by which programmes and institutions can demonstrate their compliance with accepted standards, pursue continuous improvement, and be recognized for doing so. CEA was founded in 1999 by English language teaching and administration professionals. In 2003, CEA was recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a national accrediting agency for English language programmes and institutions. This recognition gave CEA the distinction of being the only specialized accrediting agency for English language programmes and institutions in the United States. In 2005, the commission expanded its mission to include the accreditation of English language programmes and schools outside the United States. CEA now accredits over 330 programmes and institutions.

Mary Reeves of CEA says that the accreditation law in the United States has helped accredited programmes to raise the level of programme quality with over 80% of 32 programmes denied accreditation in 2012 having chosen to re-apply and eventually granted accreditation (ICEF Monitor, 2016). She states that: 'The process is so arduous, so the ones that struggle and have to come back again and again – because they have to now – survive and come out of it much better' (ICEF Monitor, 2016).

13.4 ELI Implementation of CEA Curriculum and Student Achievement Standards

In April 2013, the ELI PYELP was granted five-year initial accreditation by CEA. In April 2018, the ELI PYELP was granted 10-year reaccreditation by CEA. In both site visit reports, the CEA concludes that curriculum and student achievement, among others, were areas of programme strength. Meeting CEA standards by ELI PYELP reflects its adoption of best practices in curriculum and student achievement.

13.4.1 Curriculum

13.4.1.1 CEA Curriculum Standard 1

The curriculum is consistent with the mission of the programme or language institution, appropriate to achieve the organization's goals and meet assessed student needs, and available in writing (CEA, 2017).

How the ELI PYPELP Meets This Standard

> The Mission of the Preparatory Year English Language Program of the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University is to provide quality-intensive instruction of English as a foreign language, delivered by qualified instructors using a comprehensive communicative curriculum, to the University Preparatory Year students in order to enhance their English language skills and facilitate their college entry. (ELI, 2018)

The mission guides instruction in that the ELI PYELP provides quality-intensive instruction of English as a foreign language delivered by qualified instructors. The quality of instruction is assured by the fact that the curriculum is delivered by suitably qualified and experienced instructors, who receive on-going support and training from ELI, and whose performance in delivering the well-designed curriculum is regularly evaluated. The instruction is clearly *intensive* in that it is delivered for 18 h per week in modules of seven-weeks each. In one academic year, there are four modules. The intensive nature of the instruction is further necessitated by the fact

that the programme aims to take students from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) A1 to CEFR B1+ in four modules. The curriculum is *comprehensive* as it provides sufficiently comprehensive coverage of communicative forms and skills to represent the target exit level of language proficiency for each course. The comprehensive nature of the curriculum is supported by a wide range of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) reflecting real-world communicative needs.

The *communicative* nature of the curriculum is very clear from the fact that it is very much an SLO-based curriculum. The SLOs measure communicative competence and, as they are detailed in each level syllabus in the form of 'can do' statements, clearly articulate students' abilities to 'do' certain things, appropriate to the level, with the language taught and learned. The instruction is delivered in order to *enhance student's English language skills*. The ELI PYELP curriculum builds on student's initial language skills and helps them enhance these skills in order to realize their educational goals to sufficiently master course outcomes. Students' English language skills are shown to be enhanced as they progress from level to level as level progression is wholly dependent on students successfully passing assessments which are carefully designed to ensure that their passing demonstrates mastery of the ELI PYELP level-specific SLOs. KAU requires its newly admitted students to successfully complete the ELI PYELP to be eligible to enter KAU's various colleges to pursue their bachelor's degrees following the PY. Therefore, the instruction received by ELI PYELP students does more *than facilitate KAU college entry.* It is, in fact, a major means by which college entry can be obtained.

13.4.1.2 CEA Curriculum Standard 2

Course goals, course objectives, and student learning outcomes are written, appropriate for the curriculum, and aligned with each other. The student learning outcomes within the curriculum represent significant progress or accomplishment (CEA, 2017).

How the ELI PYPELP Meets This Standard

The course goals for each ELI PYELP level were composed to clearly show the relationship between the programme goals and the CEFR. ELI worked in close collaboration with Cambridge University Press (CUP), the current instructional materials provider, over an extensive period of time to develop course objectives to support the course goals. Five objectives were developed for each course goal for each programme level. One objective was composed for each skill: reading, listening, speaking, writing, and one added for 'Use of English'. The objectives were further developed to support the goals, and the language in which they are articulated is language appropriate to CEFR band descriptors. To support each objective, specific sets of SLOs, appropriate to the relevant CEFR band were produced. All were also supported by the instructional materials that had been designed based on the CEFR bands from A1 through B1+. The syllabus was carefully monitored and

Table 13.1 Average skill scores and average overall band scores

Gender	Listening score	Reading score	Writing score	Speaking score	Band score
M	4.7	4.1	3.9	5.6	4.5
F	5.0	4.4	4.4	4.7	4.7
Total	4.8	4.2	4.2	5.2	4.6

checked over a period of time to ensure alignment of goals, objectives, and SLOs with the instructional materials.

Course Goals, Objectives, and SLOs Represent Significant Progress Relative to the Norms of the Field

In April 2013, ELI commissioned the British Council, Jeddah, to administer IELTS tests as per IELTS established procedures for a random sample of 150 male and female students exiting the PYELP to ensure that its graduates were at the language proficiency level required and publicly announced, which was set at an overall score of 4.5 in IELTS General. The average skill scores and average overall band scores are in Table 13.1.

This average overall band score of 4.6 directly correlates to the B1 CEFR proficiency level. This was internationally recognized credible evidence that this sample of ELI 104 students had, in fact, made significant progress and provided demonstrable evidence of their having attained CEFR B1 English language proficiency after having successfully reached the final (ELI 104) level of the ELI PYELP. The CEFR correlations and their clear mapping provide concrete evidence that course goals and objectives and SLOs within the curriculum represent significant progress relative to norms in the field.

In April 2018, ELI commissioned the British Council to again administer its internationally validated test APTIS for a random selection of 128 of the programme graduates to measure the language proficiency of the programme students against this external test. The results were in line with expectations. As shown in Fig. 13.1, more than 80% of students obtained results at or above the B1+ CEFR band.

13.4.1.3 CEA Curriculum Standard 3

The instructional materials and methodologies are appropriate and contribute to the mastery of course objectives. (CEA, 2017)

How the ELI PYPELP Meets This Standard

The ELI primarily subscribes to the ‘communicative’ approach to teaching/learning EFL but not to the complete exclusion of acceptance of any other approaches and methodologies. ELI PYELP’s main aim in the classroom is to ensure that SLOs are

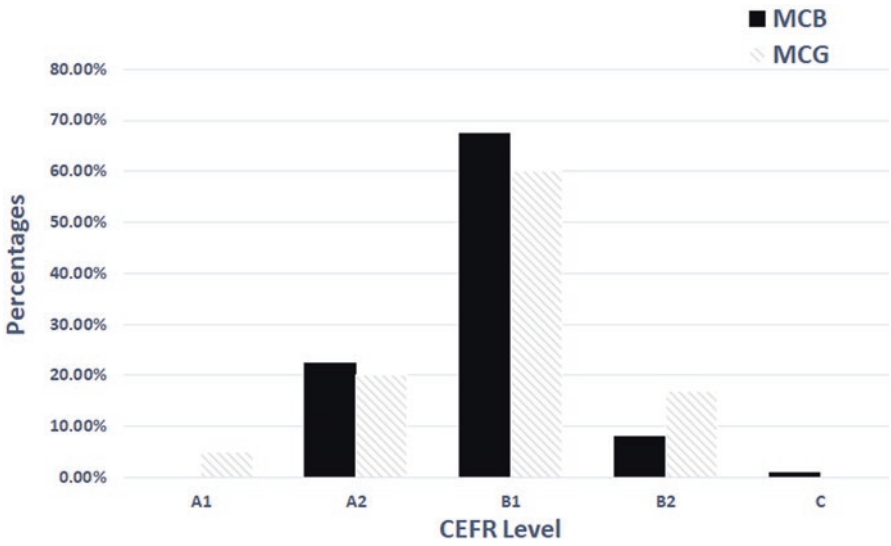

Fig. 13.1 Students' APTIS percentage scores at the CEFR levels

achieved. Instructional and learning needs vary and sometimes inevitably involve a degree of eclectic pragmatism in terms of choice of teaching approach and methodology, depending on the day-to-day needs of students and curriculum requirements. Each ELI PYELP level syllabus necessitates a 'communicative' teaching approach by faculty, as it is essentially 'communicative' itself in essence, in that the SLOs require students to 'do' things with the language learned. ELI believes that utilizing the communicative approach to deliver the curriculum is feasible in the current post-method era, especially in the Saudi EFL context. ELI expects and requires its PYELP faculty to deliver learner-centred lessons that encourage authentic communication and involve active student involvement in communicative activities. The productive and receptive skills are integrated in ELI teaching and learning. Communicative teaching and learning are also facilitated by the use of the current instructional materials which are designed to support a classroom pedagogical practice that requires learners to use English independently for communication and aids in the implementation of a communicative approach in order for learners to be able to do so.

Instructional Materials and How They Are Effective for Delivering the Curriculum

The primary instructional material used in the PYELP was found to be the best suited to the ELI's learners' needs and the most effective means for delivery of the ELI PYELP curriculum. The scrutiny was aiming to select instructional materials that:

- fitted the course outcomes
- met the student and faculty learning and teaching requirements, as evidenced in faculty and student feedback

- provided the best match to the philosophy that underpins the programme's mission and its commitment to communicative learning and teaching
- provided opportunities for differentiation
- matched the realities of the local social and cultural and wider context
- were in-line with the situational programme constraints

How Instructional Materials Are Clearly Related to Classroom Activities and Assignments

At the beginning of each module, all PYELP faculty members are provided with instructional packs, containing detailed and comprehensive pacing guides, which clearly detail, on a weekly basis, what activities, language skills, and course-book pages they are required to cover each module. The instructional materials are clearly mapped to classroom activities, and assignments in the instructional packs and the pacing guides for each level help ensure that the instructional materials are not only clearly related to classroom activities and assignments but also that the activities and assignments are conducted at a suitable pace for effective learning.

13.4.2 Student Achievement

13.4.2.1 CEA Student Achievement Standard 1

The programme or language institution has a placement system that is consistent with its admission requirements and allows valid and reliable placement of students into levels (CEA, 2017).

How the ELI PYPELP Meets This Standard

The instrument used for placement of students into ELI PYELP is the Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT). This test has been developed by Oxford University Press (OUP) and places students according to their CEFR proficiency. It is a computer adaptive test.

Placement Test Validity

Pollitt, who is internationally recognized in the field of educational measurement, clearly assesses the OOPT as a valid placement test instrument.

The OOPT has been designed, in the theory that underlies its items and in every aspect of the measuring system, to serve one primary purpose—the accurate placement of students learning English into a class or a course of teaching that is appropriate to their current needs. Anyone using it for this purpose can be confident that it is as valid for that use as possible. (Pollitt, n.d.)

Table 13.2 The OOPT results on the ELI Men's campus between 2014 and 2017

ELI PYELP level	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017
ELI 101 CEFR A1	58.02%	50.46%	55.85%
ELI 102 CEFR A2	18.50%	18.05%	17.39%
ELI 103 CEFR B1	10.96%	13.97%	11.11%
ELI 104 CEFR B1+	12.52%	17.52%	15.65%
Total	5696	4360	6532

Placement Test Reliability

Pollitt makes an interesting point concerning reliability and 'adaptive' tests such as the OOPT:

> The traditional concept of reliability is not appropriate for adaptive test systems, since each student actually takes a different test from everyone else. This means that there is no way to calculate the favourite indices of reliability, Cronbach's alpha, or KR20. (p. 11).

ELI has confidence in the OOPT's reliability, for its purposes, at ELI. The following OOPT score records from the academic years 2014–2015, 2015–2016, and 2016–2017 show the percentage of student placement in each English language proficiency level at the start of the academic year. Table 13.2 demonstrates the OOPT results on the Men's Campus for the last three academic years.

In addition, in May 2017, ELI investigated the correlation between the OOPT and a similar placement instrument, Cambridge Online Placement Test (COPT), using a sample of 246 test takers from ELI faculty on the men's and women's campuses. The results demonstrated close correlation in terms of scores. The overall results illustrated a strong correlation between OOPT and COPT with value of *0.78*. The conclusion was that they were both similar in terms of results produced. These results were reassuring as to the effectiveness of the OOPT in achieving what ELI requires it to, on a par with other tests by other test providers of equal stature in the field.

13.4.2.2 CEA Student Achievement Standard 2

The programme or language institution documents in writing whether students are ready to progress to the next level or to exit the programme of study, using instruments or procedures that appropriately assess the achievement of student learning outcomes for courses taken within the curriculum (CEA, 2017).

How the ELP PYPELP Meets This Standard

Assessment Instruments Used to Gauge Student Progress

The ELI uses a comprehensive set of assessment instruments to ascertain whether students have attained the SLOs tied to the corresponding CEFR proficiency level. These instruments test students' achievement in all four skill areas of reading,

writing, listening, and speaking in addition to grammatical and lexical skills. As ELI testing instruments are primarily achievement tests, they are, therefore, tied directly to the instructional materials being studied. Assessment instruments in use are: mid-module exam, end-of-module exam, speaking exam, writing exam, writing portfolio tasks with grammar and vocabulary question items embedded in the mid-module and end-of-module computer-based exams. They are all developed in house by ELI faculty specifically chosen and trained for this task. The overall process of assessment instruments development is overseen by the Curriculum and Test Development Unit (CTU).

Analysis of Data Collected on Student Achievement

Data on student achievement for all levels is collected for all modes of assessment and calculated to give a proportion of the total per cent. These totals are then aggregated to give the final grade in the results report. The final grade for students in 101, 102, and 103 is then used to determine whether the student has achieved the learning outcomes for that level and whether he/she can progress to the next level. A student who successfully achieves the learning outcomes at 104 then exits the programme. The data informs ELI's assessment practices by being combined into grade reports. An Annual Program Report is compiled which looks at the overall data for the academic year and makes recommendations for improvement. The main focus of data analysis is concerned with module-to-module analysis of performance outliers, where groups of students perform outside the expected performance as judged by their teacher and/or outside the performance expectations based on performance of other sections of their cohort or past cohorts. This can include situations where students perform far better or far worse than their peers on the same or similar instruments and/or specific items during a given module. When such 'jagged profile' performance is apparent, detailed review is conducted of a variety of aspects of the teaching and learning process. If there is evidence to suggest that students' results are due to an issue related to assessment production and/or administrative process, a review is conducted.

Adopting Current Best Practices in Assessment

Drawing on the best practices in language assessment, ELI has offered training opportunities and consultation sessions for its test writers and developers in recent years to help improve the design and delivery of ELI assessment instruments. During the academic year 2015–2016, all ELI test item writers were enrolled on a special training course on best assessment practices. The course was entitled 'Understanding Assessment'. It was an online and face-to-face course delivered by Peter Lucantoni, Cambridge Course Director and teacher training specialist. The course provided ELI test item writers with best practice and guidance on item design and construction and concluded with an end-of-course practical project where participants' practical work was reviewed by the course director and by peers. Special attention was given to formative assessment, Multiple Choice Question item

writing, and assessing spoken language. The course provided valuable insights and practical hands-on experience to ELI test writers. More recently, during the academic year 2016–2017, Dr. Declan Kennedy, University College Cork, Ireland, who is an internationally acclaimed authority on writing learning outcomes and their measurement, delivered a series of workshops and seminars at KAU which the concerned ELI administrators and faculty attended and participated in.

In the academic year 2017–2018, ELI organized two courses for its faculty in collaboration with the UK's leading professional development and teacher training organization, the Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE). NILE director and language assessment expert Mr. Thom Kiddle provided an in-depth and hands-on training in item writing for the ELI's faculty who are tasked with item-writing of the assessment instruments used in the ELI PYELP courses. Participants were given direct face-to-face workshops and long-term assignment-based feedback on the quality of their item-writing skills in order to help strengthen their knowledge and ability.

13.4.2.3 CEA Student Achievement Standard 3

The programme or language institution maintains and provides students with written reports that clearly indicate the level and language outcomes attained as a result of instruction (CEA, 2017).

How the ELP PYPELP Meets This Standard

Interpretation of the Achievement Scale

The achievement scale that underpins the entire ELI PYP curriculum is the CEFR. Currently, the course goal for each of the courses taught at ELI PYELP is linked to the achievement of a particular level on the CEFR's scale of language proficiency. The four ELI levels are aimed at helping students attain the first four proficiency benchmark levels in the CEFR, namely: A1 (Starter), A2 (Elementary), B1 (Pre-Intermediate), and B1+ (Intermediate), respectively. Each ELI level (course) has a set of 'can do' statements describing the student learning outcomes. 'Can do' statements are used by ELI and by the CEFR as 'user-friendly' versions of SLOs. The SLOs for each ELI PYELP course directly support the course objectives, which, in turn support the course goal. These SLOs as 'can do' statements have been developed, refined, and fine-tuned to ELI students' needs over the last six years. The current rubrics for speaking and writing assessments provide an indication for student achievement of SLOs in these two skills.

Since the host institution KAU requires a minimum 60% total score over one module as passing, then all ELI rubrics and the achievement scale and its interpretation are to be tied to this score in this on-going work. ELI has currently moved its

mid-module and end-of-module exams to a new testing platform, Question Mark. The platform allows for a very discreet and focused item analysis that can be used to perform a concurrent validity check supporting the policy that 60% is the pass score on these exams.

Accumulating Evidence of How Well Students Are Achieving the Established SLOs

The students' final marks indicating their academic performance and proficiency level can be accessed in On-Demand University Services (ODUS), which is an electronic platform. ODUS grades are maintained for all students. Detailed records of student achievement at each level are also stored electronically at ELI. ELI accumulates evidence of students' achievements of established SLOs through class course reports. These reports interpret the percentages for each component of the curriculum individually and illustrate the rationale behind the performance criteria. Based on class reports' aggregated data, campus course reports are compiled to demonstrate the quality of the programme and also reflect on the weaker areas where further improvement may be required. After all these processes, ELI reports are prepared where overall and comprehensive comparisons and analysis of the students' achievements are completed. ELI takes overall scores as stated above. This is first done at the individual class level of the course report where the teachers can comment on their view of the results, how much they feel they represent student performance, and how assessment results can inform both assessment practice and teaching strategies. Subsequently, this is aggregated on the campus level and then for the entire ELI.

The ELI Quality Assurance Unit then uses this data to identify those students of that year's cohort and tracks their performance over time. ELI looks for a performance trend that is within the expected performance parameters. This expectation is based on student's prior performance and an extensive list of other teaching and administrative factors from all classes. ELI assessment is enhanced when its confidence in its own assessment instruments and development plans is informed by sound data. The multifaceted and multistaged process of analysis provided by course reporting, which includes student performance data, contributes to ELI being in a position to have informed confidence in its perspective of students' actual course performance in terms of SLO achievement by means of performance analysis vis-à-vis assessment instruments.

13.4.2.4 CEA Student Achievement Standard 4

The programme or language institution informs students of the assessment procedures used to determine placement, progression from level to level, and completion of the programme, as well as their individual results (CEA, 2017).

How the ELP PYPELP Meets This Standard

Students are informed of the assessment procedures used to determine placement, progression from level to level, and completion of the programme on the ELI website. Students are also informed of their academic progress through mid-module exam grades, writing task grades, and speaking and writing exams marks on ODUS. The final aggregated grades are also published on ODUS which students have to use their usernames and passwords to access. When students pass a level, they are informed of their new level and schedule via ODUS.

13.5 Conclusion

When carefully implemented, accreditation standards lead to quality education across cultures and varied education systems. Quality assurance in education is certainly regarded as a form of accountability by institutions and departments, faculty and students, and other concerned stakeholders. Regulation in public as well as private higher education is necessary to promote the status of teaching and learning provided where higher education institutions need to conform to the statutes guiding the education process. Special consideration should be given to adapting national and international standards relevant to the Saudi context, in general, and to each educational institution, in particular. As such, educational leaders, stakeholders, and faculty need to ensure that quality is not only provided in the form of classroom activities but also in the various administrative and programme management practices. Consequently, it is the duty of educational leaders to play a crucial role in ensuring the transparency of QA practices, providing a balance between the implementation of QA systems and the fulfilment of long-term goals of the programmes provided, and ensuring flexibility in embracing required changes in the field of education. Emphasis should be increasingly placed on a QA process viewed from a long-term perspective.

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D. F. Staub (ed.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0