

**THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ON MINISTRY LICENSED NON-FEDERAL HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED ARAB
EMIRATES**

تأثير التقييم الخارجي على جودة مؤسسات التعليم العالي غير الاتحادية المرخصة
وزاريا في الإمارات العربية المتحدة

by

REENA RAJIVAN

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION**

at

The British University in Dubai

January 2019

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in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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ABSTRACT

External Quality Assurance (EQA) of higher education institutions and their academic programs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a mandatory requirement for their recognition by the Ministry of Education. The introduction of EQA called for a stronger regulatory role for the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) which introduced procedures such as licensure and accreditation via its Standards for Licensure and Accreditation for assuring the quality of higher education provision. These evaluation processes are associated with several expectations or intended impacts which have been mainly reported through single institutional case studies. In consideration of the above gap in literature, this study aims to evaluate if the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation has had an impact on the quality of higher education provision in the UAE.

The study draws from the concepts of three overlapping theories in social sciences - New Public Management, New Institutionalism, and Organizational Behavior and adopts a multi-phase mixed methods design to investigate the impact of CAA Accreditation using two distinct approaches: the Production-Management Approach where discussion of the impact relate to how well outcomes are achieved compared to a preset measurement (the CAA's Standards) and the Stakeholder-Judgment approach based on the views of key institutional constituencies.

The results from this study indicate that external evaluation has played a very crucial role in improving the quality of higher education provision reflected through establishing and building a quality assurance system and a strong base for effective engagement of universities. Significant improvements are noted in Program Design, particularly the manner in which UAE Universities have responded to the need for ensuring alignment of program learning outcomes with the Qualifications Framework (QF*Emirates*), and in other curricular aspects related to coverage of course content, allocation of prerequisites etc. Improvement was also visible in certain aspects of Program Management through the provision of robust and reliable IT systems, adequate library holdings, and enforcement of admission regulations. However, the study found no significant improvement in Teaching Quality that can be attributed to external evaluation. In the midst of changing academic practices forced by external evaluation, and interference in the manner in which the core business of teaching is conducted, it is hard to say that UAE institutions have established a quality culture that is devoid of reflexive, disingenuous responses to accreditation demands placed on them.

The study vouches for the benefits of conducting comprehensive impact analyses, which will provide reliable knowledge of the effects of external evaluation on institutions and create opportunities for further investigation of the dynamics of accountability, transparency and improvement.

المخلص

يعتبر ضمان الجودة المبني على التقييم الخارجي أساسياً للاعتراف بمؤسسات التعليم العالي وبرامجها التعليمية في دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة من قبل وزارة التربية والتعليم. والأخذ بضمنان الجودة الخارجية دعى لوجود دور أقوى لمفوضية الاعتماد الأكاديمي والتي وضعت إجراءات للترخيص والاعتماد من خلال معايير للترخيص والاعتماد من أجل الحرص على ضمان جودة البعليم العالي.. مع التركيز الشديد على الالتزام والتطوير. ونظراً للفجوة في الدراسات المنشورة عن أثر عمليات التقييم على نوعية وجودة التعليم العالي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. فإن هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى بحث ما إذا كان لمعايير الترخيص والاعتماد أثر علي جودة التعليم العالي في قطاع التعليم العالي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

وتوجه الدراسة من خلال ثلاثة مفاهيم نظرية متداخلة في العلوم الاجتماعية، الإدارة المؤسسية الجديدة، الإدارة العامة الجديدة والسلوك التنظيمي لتوفير فهم شامل على تأثير التقييم الخارجي. ويعتمد هذا الإطار على جوهر هذه النظريات من وجهة نظر التقييم الخارجية من خلال البعد الفني، والسياسي والثقافي. وباستخدام التصميم المتعدد المراحل والمتعدد الطرق، فإن هذه الدراسة تهدف لمعرفة أثر مفوضية الاعتماد الأكاديمي باستخدام نهجين مختلفين وهما: طريقة إدارة الإنتاج حيث تتم مناقشة تأثير ذو الصلة بمدى تحقيق المخرجات ومقارنته بالقياس المحدد سلفاً (على أساس معايير مفوضية الاعتماد الأكاديمي)، والنهج الذي يعتمد على تقييم أصحاب المصلحة حيث تتم المناقشة على أساس رؤية ووجهة نظر الجهات المؤسسية الفاعلة والمشاركة في عمليات الاعتماد.

أشارت النتائج المتحصل عليها أن التقييم الخارجي لعب دوراً بالغ الأهمية في تحسين جودة التعليم في مؤسسات التعليم العالي بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، من خلال إنشاء وبناء نظام قوى لضمان الجودة وقاعدة قوية للمشاركة الفعالة في الجامعات. وبصفة خاصة، تشير الدراسة إلى وجود تحسينات كبيرة في تصميم البرنامج التعليمي، لضمان مواءمة مخرجات البرنامج التعليمية مع منظومة المؤهلات الإماراتية وأيضاً جوانب المناهج الدراسية المتعلقة بتغطية محتوى المساق، وتحديد المتطلبات السابقة للمسابقات، تتابع المسابقات. وقد لوحظ تحسن كبير أيضاً في جوانب معينة من إدارة البرنامج من خلال توفير أنظمة قوية وموثوق بها من تكنولوجيا المعلومات، محتويات المكتبات من المصادر التعليمية وإنفاذ اللوائح الخاصة بالقبول. وبالرغم من ذلك، لم تظهر الدراسة أي تحسين ملموس في جودة التدريس يمكن اعتباره ناتجا عن الاعتماد الخارجي للبرامج. وأوضحت الدراسة أنه في ظل تغيير الممارسات الأكاديمية كنتيجة لعمليات التقييم الخارجي والتدخلات في الطريقة التي تتم من خلالها عمليات عملية التدريس ، فإنه من الصعب القول بأن جامعات دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة قد أنشأت ثقافة الجودة دون أن يكون ذلك كأثر لمتطلبات عمليات للاعتماد.

وتدعو هذه الدراسة إلى إجراء دراسة تحليلية مستفيضة لتقييم أثر عمليات متابعة ضمان الجودة الخارجية والنتائج الإيجابية للتقييم الخارجي على مؤسسات التعليم العالي، ولتسهم في خلق فرص أكبر لإجراء دراسات مستفيضة على ديناميكية المسؤولية والشفافية والتحسين.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ANQAHE	Arab Network of Quality Assurance Agencies
CAA	Commission for Academic Accreditation
ERT	External Review Team
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
EQA	External Quality Assurance
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EUA	European University Association
EVALAG	Evaluationsagentur Baden-Württemberg
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
IE	Institutional Effectiveness
IMPALA	Impact Analysis of External Quality Assurance Processes of Higher Education Approach
INQAAHE	International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KHDA	Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QFE	Qualifications Framework Emirates
SACSCOC	The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
TQM	Total Quality Management
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UIS	The UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UQAIB	University Quality Assurance International Board

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Outline of the Chapter

This chapter contributes to the thesis by (1) stating the background and motivation behind the study (2) identifying key dimensions of the global concept of external quality assurance (2) mapping how external quality assurance has manifested itself through the implementation of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation in the United Arab Emirates (3) identifying the research questions of the study, the research objectives, research methodology, and a discussion of the significance of the study to exiting literature.

1.2 Background and Motivation to the Study

The overarching aim of External Quality Assurance (EQA) is to contribute to the quality of higher education provision. Against this background, the concept of measuring the impact of EQA has gained prominence in the wake of internationalization of higher education and a re-vitalized interest in educational quality. The international higher education landscape is under pressure propelled by continuous societal developments. These developments include growth of student participation in higher education, increase in diversity of education providers, and technological advances, all of which have propelled the need for excellence in educational provision, and its outcomes (Prisacariu and Shah, 2016). The response of higher education institutions to these developments may be seen in the creation of new curricula, improved teaching and learning methodologies, and the growing importance of science, knowledge, and innovation in education.

The change has also meant a fundamental shift from traditional universities toward entrepreneurial universities and a move from autonomy towards external regulation of higher education (Chien and Chapman, 2014). Shore and Davidson (2014, p.8) in their working papers series on University Reform state, “If the idea of the university was once epitomized by terms like unbiased knowledge, blue-skies research, higher learning, scholarship and teaching, this is increasingly being replaced by an emphasis on terms like impacts, outputs, relevance, skills training, knowledge transfer, commercialization and innovation”.

Government regulation has resulted in the establishment of various national quality assurance systems developed as instruments needed to steer and nudge higher education institutions to adjust to the on-going transformation, internationalization, and privatization of higher education. Formal systems of quality assurance have become wide-spread practices in most countries. In a short span of time there has been development from single initiatives to a well-institutionalized regime that will occupy a significant place in the higher education landscape for the foreseeable future (Westerheijden, Stensaker and Rosa, 2007).

External evaluation is a mechanism through which stakeholder expectations are linked to university operations. Stensaker (2003) states that the most dominant form of quality assurance has remained accreditation of programs, although it is carried out in significantly different ways according to mandates of the relevant national system. Ursin et al. (2008) supports the view that quality assessment and quality assurance should be country-based and discipline-specific, insisting that diversity of educational systems should be maintained (cited in Romenti, Invernizzi and Biraghi, 2012). Despite differences in the way quality assurance is practiced, the main emphasis of all accreditation systems is on outputs, quality standards, and learning outcomes. A shift towards institutional audits is also seen in many countries. Institutional audits evaluate the quality mechanisms established by an institution in order to monitor and improve quality continuously. Audits have the potential of meeting many of the expectations regarding external control while also supporting improvement. Cheng (2011) states that quality audits have become the primary means of assessing the quality of teaching and learning internationally. This is an indication that the expectations of quality assurance systems have greatly changed during the last decade.

According to Hopbach (2014), a significantly different approach to quality assurance exists today that is not confined to the traditional twin objectives of accountability and enhancement. Recent trends suggest that the classic dichotomy of quality assurance purposes- accountability and enhancement, and arguments over the priority of one over the other, have now transformed into a “trinity” by including the purpose of transparency (Beerkens, 2015). While there is no debate about the appropriateness of accountability in achieving minimum standards, that alone will not serve the purpose of higher education. There must be an appropriate balance between credible accountability practices at the policy level and favorable

conditions of autonomy at the institutional level that will foster improvement initiatives. Transparency relates to the provision of information in quantitative and comparable terms. University rankings and classifications are quickly filling this market niche, thereby transforming the role of quality assurance and the state acquiring the role of a conduit of this vital information. The key dilemmas and tensions over accountability, improvement and transparency have gained more attention recently as stakeholders have become more vocal and demand value for money and proven effectiveness of education provision. These pressures naturally raise questions about the actual impact of quality assurance systems, and demand a scrutiny of its operations.

1.2.1 Managing Quality in Higher Education

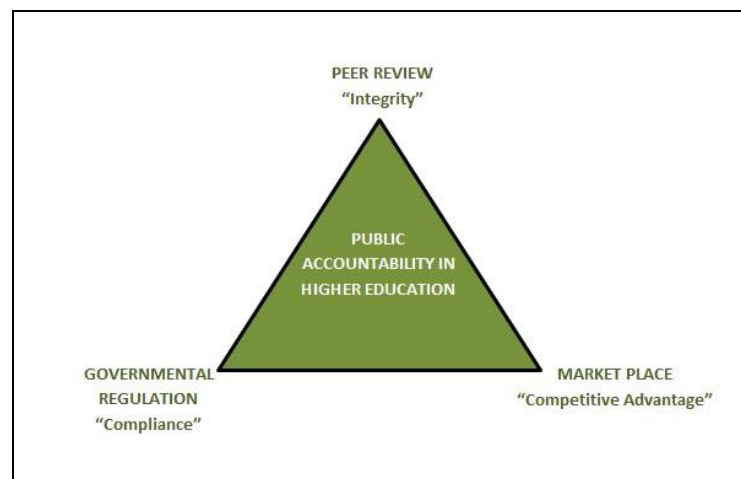
The concept of quality in higher education has gained growing attention and is of paramount importance to government, institutions, and students. The quality and extent of education received by students influences their employment opportunities and earning potential in later life. It also represents the reputation, knowledge, and capabilities of a nation. Brennan and Shah (2000) state that forces outside higher education institutions stimulate the importance of assuring quality in higher education. Expansion in student enrolments throughout the world has required policy makers to re-think and re-organize their national tertiary education systems. A report published by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) states that in the last twenty years students enrolled in higher education institutions globally have reached nearly 207 million out of which 30 percent are enrolled in private institutions (UNESCO, 2017). This estimation is predicted to surpass 262 million by 2025 (Goddard, 2012). In addition, increase in international students was reported as 4.5 million out of which a majority is from India, China, and Korea (British Council, 2013).

Changes that have occurred at the national level seem to be common to most countries including expansion of higher education institutions, diversity of provision, and encouraging student mobility, resulting in harmonization and mutual recognition of qualifications. These changes, and the concomitant expectations of the general public, have fostered mechanisms by which policy makers seek to steer higher education systems in the direction of quality assessment, accountability and competition. However, increasing costs of higher education,

youth unemployment rates, and concerns about the declining standard of graduate knowledge have created public cynicism and media headlines raising doubts on the standard of higher education provision world-over (The Economist, 2014; Kinser & Lane, 2017). From the view point of national governments, higher education intuitions are expected to prove their credibility both nationally and internationally by developing policies, procedures and mechanisms to ensure that they are meeting their educational goals.

According to Wergin (2003), higher education maintains public accountability and assures its usefulness to society in three ways, which he symbolically represents with a triangle. The base corners of the triangle represent Government Regulation and Market Place, while the apex of the triangle represents Peer Review as shown in Figure 1. Government Regulation is indicative of the fiscal and social responsibility of higher education institutions. Regulation ensures that institutions deliver programs that meet an acceptable level of quality thereby assuring compliance with national standards. Market Place represents the ability of an institution to survive in the midst of intense competition and technological advancements in order to maintain a competitive advantage. Finally, Peer Review which is at the apex of the triangle represents the authority of the institution and its faculty as the factor responsible for the quality of its programs. Although placed at the apex of the triangle indicating its superiority over the other two forms of public accountability, peer review has become the weakest link today due to the failure of the institution to develop and document quality publicly.

FIGURE 1: PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (WERGIN, 2003)



The Triangle of Wergin (2003) has expanded now to include additional areas where transparency and accountability is to be preserved. According to Santiago et al., (2008), accountability can take a number of forms, such as:

- **Quality Assurance Framework:** Quality Assurance Agencies tackle the dual requirement of accountability and improvement through three main approaches : Accreditation, Assessment, and Audits
- **Performance related funding:** allocate funding based on performance indicators to ensure that institutions focus on benchmarking of best practice, and research leading to recommendation for improvement
- **Accountability through market mechanisms:** Institutions and programs have to be competitive to be sustainable
- **Participation of external stakeholders in institutions' governing bodies:** provide advice and support to facilitate the institutions' contribution to society
- **Information on institutional results provided publicly:** institutions demonstrate accountability by publishing performance measures, including quality of teaching, research and labor market outcomes of its graduates

Surprisingly, peer review at the apex of Wergin's Triangle (2003) has been replaced by a requirement for institutions to document their achievements publicly. This may confirm his concern that the triangle collapses into a linear arrangement with the government on one end and the market place on the other. If this linearity is the case, it is clearly caused by the lack of authentic institutional engagement as a whole along with its varied constituencies. While there is no debate about the appropriateness of accountability, the associated responsibility of the institution in terms of detailed reporting, according to some studies, is considered burdensome on academics. The challenge for institutions is to find an appropriate balance between autonomy and accountability.

From the institutional viewpoint, accountability and improvement was traditionally demonstrated through the professionalism of its academics, the trust in their competence, and in institutionalized arrangements for the control and maintenance of quality. (Trow, 1994). Quality may have been demonstrated through rigorous recruitment of qualified teachers, stringent admission procedures, peer review of research and scholarship, and periodic scrutiny

of curriculum and teaching. A diminishing institutional emphasis on these quality mechanisms have occurred as a result of higher education institutions facing public scrutiny in ways that never existed before. With globalization and government pressure on institutions to demonstrate accountability, more explicit and systematic mechanisms for quality management have been embraced from the corporate world of business. Institutions looked towards various Quality Management Systems like EFQM, TQM, ISO, and Baldrige models, in order to monitor its key processes, organizational structures, policies, procedures and resources needed to implement quality management (Bollaert, 2014).

At the institutional level, quality management is increasingly focused on compliance with external demands and improving operational efficiency and effectiveness. Institutions recognize that sound planning alone does not ensure success. It must align its activities, core processes, and resources to support its mission. As the institution becomes more outcomes-oriented, it changes its outmoded organizational structure to better meet stakeholder requirements. This view corresponds with Harvey's definition which states quality assurance as the process of establishing stakeholder confidence that provision (inputs, processes and outcomes) fulfills expectations and measures up to threshold minimum requirements. According to this definition, accountability within institutions exists on three levels: Inputs, Processes and Outputs. Higher education can be depicted as a productive system where inputs are transferred into outputs. Inputs are basically students entering the educational system, their background credentials and the material, financial and human resources needed as preconditions for the functioning of the system. The process indicators provide feedback on how well a teaching or administrative process is working. Student performance in class, student evaluation of faculty and administrative processes, student support services, faculty teaching load, class size, institutional policies, procedures and governance are all useful contributing elements towards quality. Output indicators are concrete and abstract and/or value-added, for example, the results of examination, employment statistics and student satisfaction (Arjomandi et al., 2009; Chua, 2004).

Academic quality assurance is critical because it is at the center of a higher education institution's very purpose of existence. Giertz (2000) states that academics participate effectively in quality assurance systems only if it is designed to ensure attributes of quality

that they perceive as important. Academic rigor, comparability, and learning outcomes have all become useful indicators for measuring the quality of higher education and for attracting students. Shah, Lewis and Fitzgerald (2011) state that academic quality is maintained by achieving the right balance in inputs such as course design, professional development of academics, quality management of student assessments, teaching methods, and resources and infrastructure needed to support teaching and program learning outcomes.

1.2.2 Higher Education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE's Higher Education system is said to have expanded during the contemporary period i.e.; from 1971 onwards. (Kazim, 2000). The first Federal University - the United Arab Emirates University was established in the year 1976 by the then President and founding father of the UAE, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Between 1984 to early 1990s, the Higher Colleges of Technology, a second federal institution in the country, established its campuses in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Al Ain. The third Federal institution - Zayed University was established in the year 1998. With only three federal universities, higher education in the UAE was still in its nascent stages when privatization, including privatization of higher education, gained momentum. With the discovery of oil reserves, population of the country increased from only 180,000 in 1968 to around 3.75 million in 2002 in turn affecting social and educational expectations of the country (Middlehurst and Campbell, 2003). The development impetus placed on education, and higher education in particular, is also due to the unprecedented growth of university-going students in the UAE. The transformation of higher education from a traditional to a mass system has seen an influx of private colleges and universities in the UAE. Moreover, political uncertainty and safety concerns in the MENA region have made UAE a hub for students wishing to pursue higher education (Jose & Chacko, 2017). Increase in student numbers has a high potential to impact the quality of higher education provision, especially when there is considerable public concern about quality assurance and output of graduates.

In order to decentralize the education system in the country, the government established the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEK) in 2005. A similar body – the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) was created in Dubai in 2006, followed by the Sharjah Education Council. These authorities oversee the education activities in their respective

emirates. In addition, the UAE is divided into nine education zones, which are responsible for applying policy at grades K-12 in individual emirates. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the regulation of federal and private institutions of higher education. In 2012, the UAE Cabinet issued a Federal Law making education compulsory for UAE citizens in the age group of six to eighteen. An allocation of 21% (AED 9.7 billion) of the 2014 budget was made for public (AED 6 billion) and higher education (AED 3.8 billion).

A notable development in the higher education arena in the UAE was the establishment of educational free zones that permitted foreign direct investment in the country. The Emirates of Dubai, Sharjah, and Ras Al Khaimah have established free zones which are devoted to hosting branch campuses of foreign universities that are accredited in their home countries. The free zone phenomenon started in Dubai in 2003 with the establishment of Knowledge Village, an educational hub aimed at attracting branch campuses from many countries and making education as one of the leading economic activities in Dubai. The same model was followed in Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah. Institutions in the free zones were allowed to function without strictly following federal regulations. Initially, these institutions were exempted from nearly any form of quality assurance. Gradually, growing criticisms of educational quality pushed the Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) to introduce a mechanism of quality assurance on international branch campuses operating within the Dubai Free zone. KHDA introduced the University Quality Assurance International Board (UQAIB) with the aim of ensuring that international branch campuses were offering a comparable standard of education to that offered by the home campus. Guidelines and standards for auditing operations of branch campuses of higher education institutions were developed. While free-zone institutions welcomed the exception to federal rules, they were unable to attract Emirati students due to the inability to secure Emirates funding or scholarships. Moreover, for graduates of higher education institutions to have their certificates of qualification (diplomas) recognized by the Ministry of Education, their institutions must be licensed and educational programs accredited by the CAA- the national accrediting agency in the Emirates. This was of particular concern to Emirati nationals, a majority of who are employed in the public sector where only Ministry-attested qualifications are recognized. Over time, a number of Free zone institutions in Dubai opted to be licensed and their programs accredited by the CAA in order to achieve MOE recognition of their graduates, resulting in better enrolments. There are more

than ten such universities that are currently licensed by both KHDA and the CAA. The Ras Al Khaimah Free zone is also currently tightening up educational regulations to protect the interests of students.

The dawn of the quality assurance regime in the UAE began with the global transformation of higher education and the paradigmatic changes that brought privatization of higher education and concerns regarding declining educational standards through increasing emphasis on the commercial viability of higher education institutions. The global shift to mass education while viewed by some as higher education's future structure became a serious threat to academic standards for others. The proliferation of private higher education institutions in the UAE resulted in increasing numbers of institutions staffed by less-qualified teachers, teaching less-motivated students. Declining academic standards raised concerns about the quality of higher education provision leading to the establishment of the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) - UAE's formal Quality Assurance Agency for higher education. The introduction of quality assurance and its mechanisms to assure quality are connected with varied vested interests and expectations of stakeholders. The Government has the broadest set of expectations; especially in decisions related to funding and credibility of the higher education sector. Employers expect information on output factors such as qualifications and labor market eligibility. Institutions lean towards information on improvement and enhancement of internal quality assurance systems. Students demand information on the choices of programs, and value for money. These varied expectations of stakeholders, which render a vague meaning to the term "quality" has now shifted the focus away from its core value "what it is" towards a technical connotation "how to measure it" (Saarinen, 2010).

Stakeholder expectations called for a sharper focus on quality standards and a stronger panoptic role for the CAA which evolved into its current form over the last eighteen years. Evaluation procedures such as licensure, accreditation, and audits were introduced with the aim of ensuring the quality of higher education institutions and their programs. Guidelines and criteria for licensure and accreditation procedures were developed with a strong focus on compliance. Evaluation of institutions and academic programs became obligatory for recognition of qualifications. Since its inception, licensure and program accreditation in the UAE has operated in broadly the same form, albeit with changes that have been incorporated

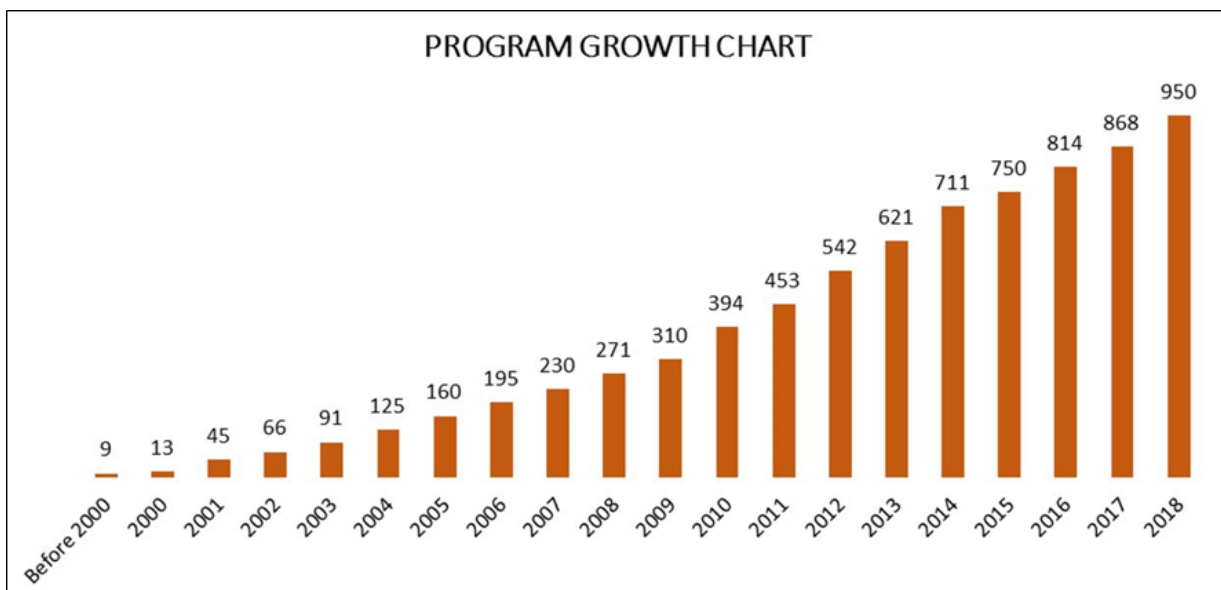
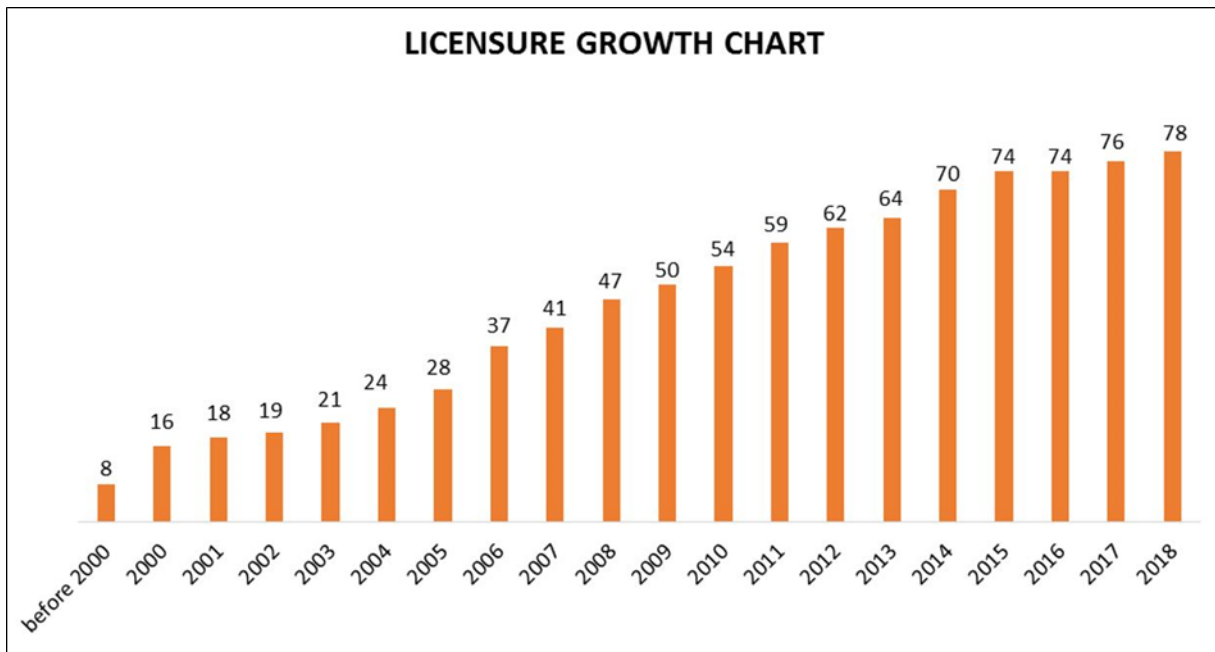
into successive iterations of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation based on good international practices. Evaluative reviews conducted by the CAA are mainly in two areas: Institutional Licensure and Program Accreditation. Licensure applies to the whole institution. It broadly covers all of the institutions' activities and is a precursor and prerequisite to accreditation. Accreditation has relatively greater specificity and aims to ensure the quality of academic programs.

The CAA's Standards for Licensure and Accreditation has served as the corner stone of these external evaluations. The Standards bring robustness to the evaluation process from which judgments of compliance are made. External evaluation in the UAE follows a classical peer-review approach. In the case of program accreditation, the institution after submitting its application undergoes an onsite review by the CAA and its identified panel of external reviewers. Based upon the information contained in the application, observations during the visit, and in-depth interviews with institutional representatives and stakeholders, the External Review Team (ERT) submits a Report to the CAA and its decision on accreditation of the program. The ERT Report is structured according to the CAA's Standards for Licensure and Accreditation and provides commentary on how well the program satisfies each Standard. After a thorough internal review of the Report by the Council of CAA Commissioners, the report is forwarded to the institution requesting a response to the various "Requirements" raised by the ERT. The Requirements are related to issues of non-compliance with the Standards. The final decision on approval of accreditation is taken only after the institution has adequately responded to and satisfied all of the Requirements raised by the ERT. The CAA has accredited more than 900 programs since its establishment out of which around 400 programs have undergone at least two or three cycles of re-accreditation reviews.

The following figures¹ illustrate the steady increase in the number of HEIs and their accredited programs since the establishment of the CAA. It is of interest to note that, despite

¹ Data indicates the number of institutions/programs initially licensed/accredited in a particular year. It includes some institutions/programs which have closed since initial licensure/accreditation. Data is extracted from the CAA database as of Dec 2018

the economic downturn world-wide, the number of HEIs and the number of accredited programs have continued to increase.



1.3 Statement of the Problem

The CAA's external evaluation processes are expected to have an impact on the quality of higher education in the UAE. Theoretically, EQA activities conducted by Quality Assurance Agencies (QAA's) can have an impact on the institution/ program even before an evaluation starts, during the course of evaluation, and after the evaluation. Before the evaluation, the institution prepares itself to adjust its practices to in order to meet the QAA's Standards by preparing a comprehensive self-study. During evaluation, institutions have the opportunity to interact with peers and self-reflect on their current practices. At the end of the evaluation, an institution is required to implement changes recommended by the QAA for authorization of the institution/program. The only difference in the resulting impact is whether a procedure results in an official approval or not. A successful evaluation, in the case of program accreditation, ends with an official notice of approval whereas in the case of audits, it results in recommendations for improvement (Kajaste, Prades, and Scheuthle, 2015). External Review Team Reports (ERT) Reports produced during external evaluations of the CAA are not in the public domain; only the decision regarding licensure or program accreditation is published as a listing of the institution/ program on its official website. This could be a major reason for the paucity of large-scale impact studies in the UAE.

However, a number of researchers have documented higher education developments in the UAE on a general scale (McCaleb, 2005; Abdulla Badri et al., 2006; Hijazi et al., 2008; Wilkins, 2010; Soomro and Ahmad, 2012). There are a few published articles on the impact of accreditation reported from institutional perspectives. For example, Salam and Shersad (2015) reported that CAA accreditation has resulted in improved motivation and commitment of academics towards continued quality assurance of the program. Improved pedagogy and high quality of entrants resulting in better learning outcomes were other noticeable impacts of the accreditation process. In addition, faculty members reported on better professional development opportunities, and satisfaction with their work. Regular assessment practices within the institution also enabled better alignment of program goals with institutional mission and a commitment from higher education leadership to support resource mobilization and improvement.

Agamy (2009) reported that the institutional effectiveness plan developed to satisfy the Standards had a great impact on programs, and teaching and learning activities. Most notable improvements were in the areas of student advising, IT infrastructure, academic support services, curricula and community service. He also reports that the institutional effectiveness plan was developed keeping in mind the mission and vision of the University, extensive research data and the Standards set forth by the CAA. Kratchovil (2011) discusses his University's experience of benchmarking models adopted by three different departments all aimed at improvement of institutional performance. The importance of benchmarking is mandated by the CAA in its Standards to be used as part of internal program review undertaken by University departments. El Tahir (2011) reports on the implementation of an internal quality assurance system that was based on the American Association of Community Colleges (1999) model and modified to address relevant areas in higher education with particular reference to the CAA Standards 2011 for research, planning and effectiveness.

Although quality assurance has existed in the UAE for more than eighteen years, there has not been a systematic evaluation of the impact that CAA's external evaluation processes has had on higher education institutions and its academic programs. In an article that sheds light on documented efforts taken by Arab states in the area of quality assurance, (Bashshur, 2005) notes that there is wide recognition that the effect of external evaluation policies on higher education systems should be measured, but research in this area provides little hard evidence on what has been accomplished so far. It should be noted that external evaluation is not a panacea for quality problems; it only serves as mechanism to promote quality assurance and provide a platform for improvement measures. Although QAA's have attempted to design their evaluation procedures to better achieve desired objectives, large-scale evaluations of the impact of these procedures are considered time-consuming and difficult to carry out.

Nevertheless, a growing interest in impact evaluations is seen globally through the implementation of many international projects. For example, EVALAG (Evaluationsagentur Baden-Württemberg) one of Germany's Quality Assurance Agencies, initiated the IMPALA (Impact Analysis of External Quality Assurance Processes of Higher Education Approach) Project which is co-funded by the European Commission. The project conducts impact analyses by applying a flexible methodology to assess the impact of different external quality

assurance procedures in higher education (Damian, Grifoll and Rigbers, 2015). The importance of conducting impact analyses is also referenced in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area in that “Quality Assurance Agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analyzing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.” (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015).

1.4 Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate if the CAA Standards for Licensure and Accreditation has had an impact on the quality of higher education provision in the UAE. This impact study will be the first of its kind in the country and is expected to provide vital information for the CAA concerning the effectiveness of its accreditation process on the quality of academic programs offered by non-federal Ministry licensed higher education institutions in the country. It will serve to enhance the accreditation review process of the CAA by promoting a better understanding of which criteria are most effectively implemented by institutions for demonstrating compliance and improvement, and which are not. In addition, the information generated out of this study will provide useful information to institutions and programs that intend to seek CAA accreditation in the future by emulating qualities that foster program improvement. Impact studies of this nature will encourage the implementation of a government policy for systematic monitoring and reporting which will in turn help in building stakeholder confidence in external quality assurance processes. It will also provide substantial evidence of the relationship that exists between quality assurance and organizational change in higher education institutions. The broader purpose of quality assurance evaluations is to serve public interests in obtaining important and reliable information on higher education quality. As stated by Stensaker (2007, p.59), “understanding the effects and outcomes of quality assurance is the most appropriate medicine for how one can best make use of quality assurance in the future.” One way to achieve this objective is to build useful resources out of the agency’s direct experience in monitoring quality. This in turn can help shape important policy decisions.

Accreditation processes carried out by the CAA occurs in a “black box” for observers and the public in general. The black box is the space between actual input and expected output of a review. External evaluations take place in this space and outputs generated out of the evaluation is scattered and hardly informative for the CAA to enable policy changes based upon built-in experiences. The value in conducting impact analyses is a way to unpack the ‘black box’ and obtain a comprehensive and empirical knowledge about how external evaluations work successfully in achieving its stated objectives. According to researchers (Damian, Grifoll and Rigbers, 2015; Stensaker, 2007), QAA’s can reap tremendous benefits from impact research. While a few consider it to be in a stage of infancy, others consider it as a sign of a maturing field. Stensaker (2007, p.59) states “this change represents a challenge in that it may mark the end of an era associated with enthusiasm and the beginning of an era more characterized by realism in the field”.

Conducting large-scale impact analyses is labor intensive, requires time and resources, and has to deal with complexities of internal validity (causality) and external validity (generalization). Grifoll et al. (2013) state that impact analyses become difficult when the focus of the research is at a micro-level, particularly, because of its complicated structure and multiplicity of hypotheses making it hardly feasible. Moreover, Leiber, Stensaker and Harvey (2015) suggest that an appropriate combination of qualitative and quantitative measures must be used to assess the impact; else, there is the fear of oversimplifying reductions. Impact evaluations are complex but nevertheless, many quality assurance agencies have recognized its importance and have begun analyzing the general findings of their quality assurance activities. It is now seen as an integral part of quality improvement of the agencies’ work and a core element of evidence-base of quality assurance agencies. Damian, Grifoll and Rigbers (2015) state that so far impact evaluations have been carried out in the framework of thematic analyses. However, such analyses carried out by QAA’s are not sufficient to generate reliable findings in a comprehensive manner. QAA’s must be challenged to develop smart instruments and methodologies for impact measurement of quality assurance. (Leiber, Stensaker and Harvey, 2015).

This research is an attempt to evaluate the impact of CAA’s accreditation process at the academic unit level and assess the extent to which programs have addressed threshold quality

standards and exhibit their compliance with external evaluation. It also aims to uncover areas where improvements above threshold requirements were noted. The key objectives of this research are listed thus to:

- identify key quality segments pertaining to the curricular domain that is expected to have an impact on the quality of academic programs
- conduct a deductive qualitative content analysis of the ERT Reports on the identified curricular segments over two accreditation cycles
- develop a rubric that defines and categorizes the identified quality segments.
- assign weightages to narratives extracted from ERT Reports on the identified quality segments, and statistically report trends over two accreditation cycles.
- develop a survey instrument to obtain faculty perspectives on the impact of accreditation at the academic unit level
- develop a survey instrument to obtain perspectives of Heads/ Staff of Institutional Effectiveness Offices on the perceived impact of accreditation on the institutions' internal quality culture.
- conduct interviews with representative faculty and QA staff to gain a deeper understanding of the information obtained through surveys.
- document conclusive findings, and generate future recommendations

These objectives have guided the researcher in formulation of the research questions, hypotheses, and methodology adopted in the study.

1.5 Research Questions

The locus of EQA in the UAE originated via the introduction of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation (the Standards) which provided specific guidance for institutional licensure and program accreditation, to assure the quality of higher education operation and provision against international norms. Although refined through several iterations to the latest (2011) release, the external evaluation requirements of the Standards are associated with several expectations or intended impacts. Therefore, the central question that will be addressed in this study is stated as follows:

Have the UAE Standards for Licensure and Accreditation had an impact on the quality of higher education provision in Ministry licensed Non-Federal Higher Education Institutions?

In order to inform a coherent discussion, the main research question is broken down into the following three sub-questions:

1. Do External Review Team Reports of the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) indicate that external program accreditation has resulted in tangible improvements to academic programs offered by UAE institutions? Which areas have shown the greatest positive impact and which have shown the least positive impact?
2. Has accreditation had an impact at the academic unit level from the perspectives of faculty involved in the accreditation process? Do faculty opinions on the impact of accreditation vary based on the level of their involvement in the accreditation process? How do they perceive the positive and negative aspects of the impact of accreditation?
3. Has accreditation resulted in consequential changes to an institution's internal quality culture?

To investigate these research questions, potential linkages to existing literature and criteria of the Standards were reviewed in an attempt to discover the underpinning factors that affect program quality. Against these observations, the researcher formulated some hypotheses that will help answer the research questions.

1.6 Hypotheses

1.6.1 Ex-post Facto Before -After Analysis of External Review Team (ERT) Reports

The impact of accreditation on program quality is debatable. Tavares, Rosa and Amaral (2010) argue that there are not many extensive studies on the effects of accreditation on quality of curriculum or teaching. Horsburgh (1999) states that there are many factors that impact innovation in curriculum, and teaching and learning beyond external quality monitoring. External Standards are said to focus more on the structural and organizational aspects of quality rather than pedagogical factors. The various elements of the CAA's

Standards that impact on an educational program may be categorized within the boundaries of content and resources that impinge curriculum design and those that concern the delivery and assessment of programs. These factors can be broadly categorized as program design, program management, teaching quality and program effectiveness. It is therefore hypothesized that if accreditation improves program quality, then there should be an improvement in program design, program management, teaching quality, and program effectiveness from one accreditation cycle to the next.

***Null Hypothesis H_{01} :** There is no significant improvement in Program Design scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.*

***Alternative Hypothesis H_{11} :** There is a significant improvement in Program Design scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.*

***Null Hypothesis H_{02} :** There is no significant improvement in Program Management scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.*

***Alternative Hypothesis H_{12} :** There is a significant improvement in Program Management scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.*

***Null Hypothesis H_{03} :** There is no significant improvement in Teaching Quality scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.*

***Alternative Hypothesis H_{13} :** There is a significant improvement in Teaching Quality scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.*

***Null Hypothesis H_{04} :** There is no significant improvement in Program Effectiveness scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.*

***Alternative Hypothesis H_{14} :** There is a significant improvement in Program Effectiveness scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.*

1.6.2 Faculty Perspectives on the Impact of Accreditation

External quality monitoring creates internal institutional debates about effective teaching and learning and in the shaping of programmes and curricula and, thus, initiates changes in academic culture. Dill (2000) argues that in these circumstances the views of faculty members must be considered and institutional trust in the process must be developed. Harvey (2003)

states that accreditation is not something that engages the majority of staff. Confirming this observation, a study by Rosa, Tavares and Amaral (2006) has proven that perceptions of institutional members differ on the extent of impact of quality assurance. Therefore, it is hypothesized that faculty perceptions of the impact of accreditation differs based on their involvement in the process.

***Null Hypothesis H_{05} :** There are no statistically significant differences in the perspectives of faculty who are fully involved, partially involved, indirectly involved, and not involved on the impact of accreditation on Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness*

***Alternative Hypothesis H_{15} :** There are statistically significant differences in the perspectives of faculty who are fully involved, partially involved, indirectly involved, and not involved on the impact of accreditation on Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness*

1.7 Methodology adopted in the Study

For impact analyses, valid and reliable results can be best achieved by an adequate combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Leiber, Stensaker and Harvey; 2015). The methodology of preference of the researcher in this study is a before-after comparison of data from accreditation reports, surveys, and interviews with relevant stakeholders. Thus, a mixed methods approach using a triangulation design was adopted to address the research questions. Phase I of the study used an ex-post before-after design based on data collected from Program Accreditation Reports of the CAA. Using criterion based sampling, fifty (50) Accreditation Reports covering two periods of accreditation cycles was used for the analysis. A Quality Rubric and Scoring Chart developed by the researcher was used to quantify coded narratives from Accreditation Reports. In Phase II of the study, stratified purposeful sampling was used to gather data from a cross-sectional survey of two hundred and sixty-five (265) full-time faculty members using a web-survey form. This was followed-up with email interviews of eight faculty members. In Phase III of the study, simple random sampling was used to survey thirty-nine (39) Department Heads of Quality Assurance units using a web-survey form. The survey followed telephone interviews with ten QA

Department Heads. Finally, results from the three phases are triangulated to address the main research question of this study.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Following national mandates or voluntary adaptation, higher education institutions world-wide have adopted various mechanisms of assuring the quality of teaching and learning. Quality is now seen as something that can and should be managed and improved constantly (Pratasavitskaya and Stensaker, 2010). Theoretically, the processes adopted to manage and assure quality are expected to generate potential academic benefits (Westerheijden, 1999). He argues that studies on quality management, its implementation, and its impacts are important in gaining a deeper understanding of higher education as a broad field of research. Although one can find circumstantial evidence through single institutional case studies (Salam and Shersad (2015; Agamy 2009; Kratchovil 2011; El Tahir 2011), there is generally a paucity of comprehensive research on the impact of external evaluation in the UAE.

Therefore, from a research perspective, this study is significant in that it is a rare attempt to systematically provide a concrete evaluation of the information arising from CAA's accreditation reports. The information obtained from this research will provide the CAA with vital information concerning areas where the impact of its evaluation process is most notable. Moreover, as observations of ERT's contained in program accreditation reports are kept confidential, this research will for the first time, provide an overview of the areas of impact over a range of programs that have undergone the CAA's accreditation process. The study will also contribute to the existing cluster of international impact studies by providing a UAE perspective to the accreditation context. Furthermore, there is a constant pressure for accrediting agencies to directly involve in efforts to foster educational improvement. The results of this research will indicate areas that have improved and those where more attention is needed.

1.9 Thesis Structure

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the study, defines the research question and main purposes of the study.

Chapter 2 of this thesis will discuss relevant literature associated with the concept of quality, quality assurance, its scope and implementation in higher education with a focus on practices in the United Arab Emirates. It applies concepts from three theories in social sciences- the New Public Management theory, Neo-institutional theory, and Organizational Behavior theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of external evaluation on higher education institutions from the lens of external evaluation. Existing research on the impact of external quality assurance on universities are analyzed which forms the basis of this investigation and leads to proposing a conceptual frame for this study.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed examination of the philosophy underpinning the research design adopted in the study. It elaborates on the sampling methodology, procedures for data collection, how data will be analyzed and interpreted in all three phases of the study.

Chapter 4 presents the results of data analysis and insights gleaned from the analysis in each of the three phases of the study

Chapter 5 includes the summary of findings and presents the researchers interpretation of the results by offering a reflection on the relationship between existing literature and the findings from actual field work. It includes a critical assessment of the study by presenting its limitations. It also accounts for future research recommendations and a concluding note.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Outline of the Chapter

The aim of this chapter is to explore the concept of quality and quality assurance that changing values have introduced into the higher education landscape as a result of internal and external quality assurance practices. Discarding functionalistic definitions, the thesis defines quality as the standards it must meet, specifically, quality standards in teaching and learning by mapping relevant quality parameters against various criteria and sub-criteria included in the CAA's Standards for Licensure and Accreditation 2011. This provides a solid rationale to establish external quality assurance as a mechanism for ensuring quality in higher education focusing on practices in the UAE. Three different but overlapping theories in social sciences (New Public Management theory, Neo-institutional theory, and Organizational Behavior theory) provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of external evaluation on higher education institutions. In addition, research on the impact of external quality assurance on universities is analyzed for their scope, coverage, methodology and content. A critical analysis of identified gaps in existing research is identified and a conceptual model for this study is proposed.

2.2 Conceptual Considerations

This section examines the extant literature of the terms “quality” and “quality assurance” and its relevance to higher education. It explores the different dimensions of quality by presenting possible interpretations of the concept. An attempt is made to place the “Standards-based” approach to quality assurance in context of the application of the CAA Standards for Licensure and Accreditation in the UAE which constitutes a dominant technical perspective. An alternative approach to studying quality is through stakeholder perspectives which emphasize the presence of multiple interest groups with particular agendas and diverging interpretations of quality and quality assurance.

2.2.1 Arguments on Standard Definitions of Quality

Quality, a key word in higher education and a comparative term expresses different connotations to different people. Numerous studies that describe quality (Saarinen, 2010; Van Kemenade et al., 2008; Newton, 2002; Harvey & Green, 1993) can be identified in the literature. For a study in higher education, it is important that quality-related elements are described, as well as requirements defined and operationalized (Bernhard, 2012, p.49). A collection of these definitions or connotations on the concept of quality, which expresses the interests, expectations, and views of the author, is listed up in Table 1.

TABLE 1: DIFFERENT CONNOTATIONS OF QUALITY

Author(s)	Quality Definition / Connotation
Carter (1966)	In the evaluative meaning, quality is used to describe the value of an object, person, or experience
Feldman & Newcomb (1969);	Student living environments also appear functionally linked to quality
Chickering (1969)	Quality infers a high degree of fidelity between the purposes, philosophies, and goals of the institution and the behavior of persons frequenting the institution's environment
Withey (1975)	Quality in the undergraduate student experience is better thought of as a simple elegance, a perceived sense of well-being and accomplishment including a variety of sensations shared by partners in the enterprise.
Campbell, Converse & Rogers (1976)	The quality continuum reflects the degree to which clarity is represented in an object or experience
Astin (1977)	most popular multidimensional approach to assessing quality is the input-environment-output model
Neave (1986)	Quality is elusive
Gibson (1986)	Quality is notoriously elusive of prescription, and no easier even to describe and discuss than deliver in practice
Harvey and Green (1993)	Quality may be defined as exceptional, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money, transformation
Scott (1994)	No authoritative definition of quality in higher education is possible
McConville (1999)	There is no definition of quality...you know it when you find it!
Newton (2002)	Quality is bureaucratisation, impression management and conformity

Author(s)	Quality Definition / Connotation
Morley (2003)	Quality is Power
Stensaker (2004)	Vague and slippery concept
Murphy (2004)	Quality is linked to and depends on ethical behavior
Elken, (2007)	If we do not know what it is, then nor do we know how to improve it
Vlasceanu et al (2005)	It is multidimensional, multilevel dynamic concept
Van Kemenade, Pupius and Hardjono (2008)	Quality may be defined as value systems - for whom (object)?, by whom (subject)?, by which (standard)? and, against which (values)?
Brink (2010)	Quality is conformance to Standards
Marginson (2011)	Quality is Public Good: better informed citizens leading to better democracy
Schindler et al. (2015)	Quality as purposeful, transformative, exceptional, and accountable

These different definitions of quality in higher education suggest that a few target a central aim or outcome, while others identify specific indicators which reflect desired inputs and outputs. Schindler et al (2015) argue that there has been no agreement on a common definition of quality. This is because quality assurance is no longer a national undertaking- different countries address quality assurance in a different fashion conducive to its social, economic, and cultural factors. A widely quoted seminal work of Harvey and Green (1993) highlights five discrete but interrelated ways of thinking on quality. When labeled as ‘exceptional’, it denotes excellence and high standards, as ‘perfection’ it focuses on processes and meeting set specifications, as ‘fitness for purpose’ it relates to meeting customer requirements, as ‘value for money’ it denotes accountability and effectiveness, and as ‘transformation’ it is expected to cause a qualitative change of process or form (Bollaert, 2014). These conceptions offer different analytical frameworks to interpret the meaning of quality.

In order to establish how quality is related with higher education, Elassy (2015) discusses these definitions from two standpoints- as signified in the original work, and as interpreted by higher education stakeholders:

- **Quality as exceptional:** The notion of “exclusivity”, “uniqueness”, and “distinctiveness” is implied when quality is defined as exceptional. It is achieved through extremely high

standards of production, delivery, and presentation making it out-of-reach of the common public. In higher education, it is equated with public perception of elite universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. This notion of quality is not considered useful as it is inappropriate to judge all institutions on the same scale as Oxford and Cambridge.

- **Quality as perfection:** This definition “democratizes” the notion of quality and postulates that if consistency is achieved, quality can be attained by all. Quality here is seen as being flawless and focuses on process as opposed to inputs and outputs. Watty (2003) suggests that higher education cannot always produce defect-free graduates and hence this meaning has no value and cannot be applied to higher education.
- **Quality as fitness for purpose:** Quality has a focus on “effectiveness” from this view point. As fitness for purpose, it aims at fulfilling customers’ requirements, needs or desires. Kis (2005) relates the definition to a purpose defined by the provider or customer. Lomas (2001) suggested that fitness for purpose seems to be an appropriate definition for higher education considering the managerial role assumed by institutional actors. Exponents of this view also argued that quality has no meaning except in relation to the purpose of the product or service. The difficulty here was to clarify the true purpose of higher education as different stakeholders view institutional purpose and quality in different ways. A related problem was to define a measure of fitness for purpose, acknowledging that not all purposes are acceptable. It also raises the issue of who should determine the purpose of higher education. Gibbs (2011) recommended a substitute to the definition which he termed as “good-enough practice”. He however states that unlike the emphasis on matching definitive purposes (as might be the case in manufacturing), good-enough practices require that quality satisfies the anticipations of the reference group, albeit, imperfectly.
- **Quality as value for money:** This is a populist notion of quality and focuses on “efficiency”. It sees quality in terms of return on investment. The growing tendency of Governments to require accountability from higher education institutions reflects this view.
- **Quality as transformation:** The focus of quality here is on “value-added” change. In higher education transformation denotes enhancement and empowerment of students that

emerges with gaining new knowledge. The trouble however is that transformation is difficult to measure against pre-determined standards and benchmarks.

These conceptions noted above have been used by researchers time and again to clarify the approach to studying quality assurance in higher education. For example, conceiving quality as transformational or exceptional relates to judgments that are situational and socially constructed and therefore an interpretive approach is most suitable. On the contrary, the other notions of quality are rooted in a positivistic epistemology as it assumes that standards and benchmarks are useful measurements of quality. Giertz (2000) points to two common mistakes that researcher often make- (1) approaching the quality evaluation process without clarity of what it means in the particular context, and (2) considering quality as a self-explanatory concept. He reminds researchers that quality assessment should not be detached from its purpose and context.

Van Kemenade, Pupius and Hardjono (2008) argue that Green's definitions of quality may seem insufficient in explaining current higher education scenarios and urge more attention to the changing values brought about by internal and external quality management practices. Discarding the functionalistic definitions, they approach quality as constituents of value systems. According to them, the questions on quality to be answered are: for whom (object)? by whom (subject)? by which (standard)? and, against which (values)? Clarification of the "object" is crucial to determining the unit of analysis e.g. are we analyzing the quality of the curriculum, quality of pedagogy, quality of students or quality of the university as a whole? "Standards" determine the outcome indicators against which quality is measured e.g., learning outcomes, student satisfaction etc. The "subject" is the prime agent that determines benchmarks and standards. Finally, "values" are categorized as control, continuous improvement, commitment, and breakthrough- typical of the very purposes of a quality assurance system.

2.2.2 Quality as Conformance to Specifications or Standards

Quality issues in higher education are closely related to standards. Harvey (1993) states that quality and standards are not the same- 'Standards' are specified and usually measurable outcome indicators which are used for comparative purposes. Brink (2010) states that if "quality" is the answer to the question "is it good?", then "standards" answer the question "is it good enough"? The standards-based concept of quality has its roots in the model of quality control

applied in the manufacturing industry. According to this traditionalist notion, the quality of a product is determined based on its conformance to pre-determined conditions (Green, 1995). In higher education, “Standards” refer to the threshold levels that must be met by institutions or programs to be endorsed by an accreditation agency. It implies two objectives- (1) that threshold standards are met in all institutions/programs, and (2) that institutions/programs performing below the standard face sanctions or eventually close down (Martin and Stella, 2007).

The key to a successful external evaluation process is thus the effectiveness and clarity of the standards and criteria for authorization. While criteria and standards for external evaluation differ from one country to another, in general, it includes institutional review and assessment in the following areas: (1) the mission and vision of the university, (2) its process for planning and evaluation, (3) academic programs, (4) its system of governance, (5) the quality of its faculty and administrative staff, (6) student admission, (7) advising and support services, (8) library and information technology, (9) physical facilities, (10) fiscal resources and (11) quality assurance mechanisms (Raouf and Ahmed, 2008). In the UAE, the CAA Standards for Licensure and Accreditation guide the process of institutional licensure and program accreditation in reference to its eleven Standards which include most of the identified elements above including criteria for public disclosure and integrity, research and scholarly activities and community engagement. Green (1995) asserts that a standards-based approach to quality has an inherent benefit, in that it provides all higher education institutions a choice to seek quality in one way or another. The drawback however is that threshold standards only encourage the achievement of minimum standards, but may not promote excellence and continuous improvement (Stensaker and Harvey, 2011). However, Bendixen and Jacobsen (2017) state that even if standardization does not mean “better students”, it brings in greater consistency in relation to the procedures institutions apply to their quality assurance system.

2.2.3 Quality Standards in Higher Education

According to Harvey (2006), standards in higher education relate to four areas of activity: Academic Standards, Standards of Competence, Service Standards, and Organizational Standards (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: QUALITY STANDARDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION



Academic standards measure students' ability to fulfill the requirements of a program of study through a mode of prescribed assessment demonstrating knowledge and understanding. Sharp (2017, p.142) refers to academic standards as judgments made on the level of student achievement embedded in the dynamic consensus of practitioners of a particular discipline. Standards of competence measure students' abilities in a range of competencies needed for induction into a profession. Service standards are measures to assess identified elements of the service or facilities provided to students such as turnaround time for assessing student work; class sizes, academic advising; library facilities, learning infrastructure and so on. This represents a transformative approach to quality that aims to enhance student experience by careful planning of resources and other aspects of teaching and learning to be a part of institutional strategic planning. Organizational standards denote the attainment of formal recognition of internal quality management systems to ensure effective management of organizational processes and clear dissemination of organizational practices.

Sharp (2017, p.142) argues that there is a conceptual distinction between academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities (service standards). Sound academic standards may refer to clearly defined learning outcomes benchmarked against external reference points (e.g., qualifications framework), supported by a robust assessment regime, and moderated by a panel

of peers. A similar arrangement of external evaluation can be found in the UAE. An outcomes-based approach to education emerged due to increased student enrollments coupled with public claims questioning the outcomes of educational provision. Articulating and measuring learning outcomes is embedded in the most recent edition of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation (2011) which states that "...program learning outcomes are appropriate to the level of qualifications awarded". However, the burden of proof rests on institutions themselves to evidence alignment in their self-study applications. The standards regarding the quality of qualifications and what a learner can be expected to achieve for each award is enumerated in the QFE Handbook published in 2012. The QF*Emirates* has a structure of ten levels based on specified standards of knowledge, skills and competence. These standards define the outcomes to be achieved by learners seeking to gain qualifications at a particular level. Among these levels, 5 to 10 are relevant to higher education in the UAE. Service standards on the other hand may include formal teaching, provision of learning resources, student support services, academic guidance, physical facilities, information technology, laboratories, and leisure facilities. These are covered under various criteria within the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation (2011).

Teaching is a key determinant of a student's academic formation and transition into the labour market. Srikanthan and Darylmppe (2002, p.221) state that within the teaching function, students play the key role of participants, and therefore the focus of quality evaluation should be on the attributes of learning determined by:

- parameters of content and resources governing the curriculum design
- parameters of delivery and assessment governing the enhancement of the learner

For this study, situating quality in the context of teaching and learning is conceptualized as the standards it must meet. In this regard, the CAA's Standards for Licensure and Accreditation, Section 3- Educational Program, stipulates that "academic programs offered by an institution are appropriate to its mission, in the delivery of teaching and instruction, and in the assessment of student achievement. The institution also demonstrates that academic programs and courses are delivered as they are specified, are reviewed and continuously improved, and that students meet the intended outcome" (Standards for Licensure and Accreditation, 2011). This definition embodies the first two activities discussed by Harvey (1999). Further, Standard (3.2- Curricula) ensures that the program of study has all components necessary in terms of content, coverage, progression, level and practice. Standard (3.3.4) ensures that appropriate assessment tools are

employed for the specified learning outcomes. Aligning course and program learning outcomes to the appropriate level descriptor of the Qualifications Framework (QF*Emirates*) assumes that the students would have attained the required knowledge, skills and competencies needed for employment.

In a study that intended to evaluate how students interpreted their understanding of quality, it was noted that most related the term to academic standards (Cheng, 2011 p. 11). A later study by Akerlind (2004) indicated that the key dimensions held by teachers on the concept of quality were transmission of information to students or supporting their conceptual understanding. (Cited in Zerihun, Beishuizen and Os, 2011). El-Khawas (2014) reported that assessment of student learning outcomes made a difference for some academic institutions in the United States. Improvements were noted in course content, pedagogy and the sequencing of courses. Advising was also strengthened to give greater clarity on requirements and deadlines that students found confusing. Some academic institutions introduced new reviews of student progress at significant mid-points in their studies. CAA Standard 4 (2011) - Faculty and Professional Staff, specifies that the “institution should demonstrate that it has an appropriately qualified faculty and administrative and technical staff of a sufficient number to meet all requirements of its programs, services and activities and to achieve its mission”. Further, Section 6- Learning Resources stipulates that “the institution provides learning resources and services for students and faculty members that adequately support teaching and learning”. Harvey’s definition of service standards are covered in these requirements.

Teaching Quality can be defined diversely according to various authors and for specific purposes (Vieira, 2002). Conceptions of institutional pedagogy vary from external Standards imposed by accreditation agencies. Standards are conceptualized within a given pedagogical ideology for accreditation purposes and often fail to provide a coherent picture of what actually happens in a classroom. Higher Education institutions have developed frameworks to operationalize teaching and learning indicators within the education process. “Quality teaching” according to Biggs (2001) is described as an outcome, a property, or a process. The framework proposed by Biggs requires institutions to reflect on (1) its quality model, (2) quality enhancement, and (3) quality feasibility. This quality model demands that institutions make explicit their theory of teaching and learning, and base their academic decisions on these. Further to reflect on quality, the

institution should be asking questions like, “what impedes quality teaching?” and “what can be done to remove the impediments of quality teaching?” (Zou, Du and Rasmussen, 2012).

An integrated framework for higher education quality surrounding four stages of the education process was suggested by Finnie and Usher (2005), and Usher and Savino (2007). At the input stage, the entry credentials of students, professional level and qualifications of teaching staff, financial resources, and material facilities for students and teaching staff are key determinants of quality. At the process stage, the quality and content of the curriculum, pedagogical methods, and teaching environment are crucial. At the output stage, on one hand the improvement in student abilities and on the other hand achievement of institutional/ program objectives reveal the quality of the program. Finally, at the outcome stage, higher education demonstrates its effectiveness in contributing to the community. This happens by way of sustaining the personal development of students and their employability in the corporate world.

2.2.4 EQA Impacts Institutional Cultures

At the institutional level, quality management concerns two aspects: (1) the need to comply with the requirements of the National Quality Assurance system, and (2) the need to increase internal efficiency. Both these needs generate an increase in internal quality assessment activities resulting in organizational change. External quality assurance therefore can have an impact on academic cultures or sometimes academic cultures find their way to respond to changes resulting from an external evaluation. (Veiga, Rosa and Amaral, 2011). “Culture is what people feel about themselves, their work, their institutions” (Brenan and Shah, 2000, p.115). It encompasses a social structure, some common rules, procedures, and beliefs that distinguish them from the rest. Brennan and Shah (2000) state that the presence of a few essential factors, ensure that an institution is able to successfully meet its twin purposes- securing external status, and supporting internal development, which are the main focus of institutional effectiveness efforts:

- The importance with which quality assessment is regarded within the institution
- The kinds of internal quality assurance systems that are introduced, and the extent to which they are implemented consistently across the institution

- The existence of a strong relationship between staff groups in order to produce a successful collective response to quality assessment.
- Supportive leadership

According to Schein (1994), organizational culture can be analyzed at three different levels- the visible artifacts which are the structural or constructed environment of the organization, the second level is of values- the goals, ideals, norms and standards that can be measured. The third more complicated level is the psychological analyses of why members of the organization act the way they do. The symbolic or cultural side of quality in higher education represents the values, attitudes and behaviors of its community members. Studies on institutional quality culture have stressed the importance of administrator and faculty support in determining the fate of institutional effectiveness measures. (Morse and Santiago, 2000; Welsh and Metcalf, 2003; Lo Cascio, 2010; Emil and Cress, 2013; Deem, DeLotell and Kelly, 2015). Ideally, these studies reflect that institutions are not just creating quality assurance structures, but are also developing internal quality cultures that connect to their everyday activities. Several researchers have used sociological theories to analyze the impact of external quality assurance on academic cultures. For example, the cultural theory has been used in a comparative study of values and beliefs of German and Dutch academics (Maassen, 1996), to study the impact of new public management on Norwegian Universities (Frolich, 2004), to understand the extent to which quality assessments affect the relationship of individuals with their institutions (Veiga, Rosa and Amaral, 2011), and how the structure and management of an institution and culture and position of individual disciplines affect the outcomes of quality assurance (Haapakorppi, 2011). The impact of quality assurance on academic cultures is usually invisible, and characterized as activities subordinated to main institutional tasks and intertwined with other procedures and processes.

External evaluation continues to be the primary method by which higher education institutions assure and improve quality of its operations (Eaton, 2007). The requirements of external accreditors focus on the existence of a structural framework and a process, which ensures that the institution has relevant and valid mechanisms to determine how information is collected and used to improve curricula and pedagogy (Ewell, 2009). From the viewpoint of external quality assurance, academic cultures can be weakened or strengthened depending upon the capacity of institutions to embrace the need - whether for change or for compliance. Schein (1994) states that

quality culture in higher education institutions can be enforced by structural decisions, which in turn stimulate shared values and beliefs. The enforcement of such structural decisions are embodied within the Standard 2- Quality Assurance of the CAA's Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. Specifically, CAA Standard 2.1 requires institutions "to demonstrate that it has a well-designed system which provides the institution with the capability to determine whether objectives of its academic, student and administrative service units, and learning outcomes of its programs and courses are met" (CAA, 2011). This also reflects Harvey's (2006) definition of organizational standards, which ensure that adequate policies and practices are in place for successful operations.

Irrespective of the various internal arrangements and contexts of higher education, the prime notion of quality assurance is that institutional aims and objectives are met and targets achieved. Essential to external quality assurance is also the quality and integrity of institutional reports, and the analyses of such data that reflects institutional commitment to demonstrating accountability and effectiveness (Brittingham, 2009). Institutional assessment based on a culture of evidence is one of the most important components of QA in higher education (Syed and Mojock, 2008). Further, Wergin (2003) argues that true academic quality stems from the authentic engagement of the institution with its various constituencies. He unveils six vital elements that represent an ideal institutional climate – a leadership of engagement, engaged departments, a culture of evidence, a culture of peer collaboration and peer review, respect for difference, and evaluation with consequence. Engaging in useful discussions on the meaning of data generated out of institutional evaluations provides a reflective dimension to the quality process. Wergin asserts that this is simply not limited to "closing the loop", but, engaging in a critical reflection activity - essentially answering the basic question- "how is what we are doing congruent with and supportive of our vision?" (Wergin, 2003, p.116). An effective institutional assessment program can therefore enhance student learning, initiate academic and institutional improvements and validate the QA process itself. If quality initiatives are not able to soak up the values of the institution, and gain the confidence of its members, it is because higher education institutions have not endorsed it and embraced it in a cultural way (Pompili, 2010).

2.3 The Context: QA & Authorization of Higher Education Institutions

This section will enumerate the basic variations in quality assurance, the mechanisms of external quality assurance and authorization of higher education institutions as a result of external evaluation from a global as well as local stand-point. The purpose is to develop a general understanding of the scope of external quality assurance applicable to situations across national boundaries.

2.3.1 Variations in Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance in higher education institutions can occur as part of internal institutional procedures or as external to the institution. However, Harvey (1999) observes that recently it has become a shorthand term for external quality monitoring, evaluation, or review, showing its growing association with external quality assurance processes. Despite having its roots in the corporate world, Quality Assurance has captured a significant place in higher education literature and policy (El-Khawas, 2014). Quality assurance is also defined as “An all-embracing term referring to an on-going, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programmes” (Martin and Stella, 2007, p.34-35). According to this definition, quality assurance is considered a part of the quality management of higher education and indicates the actual process of external evaluation such as reviewing, measuring and judging the quality of higher education institutions and programs. Harvey (2006) describes Quality Assurance in Higher Education as “a method of establishing investor confidence that provision (input, process and outcomes) fulfils expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements”. This definition which focuses on investor’s expectations is reflected in Cheng's (2003) research. He suggested three paradigms of quality assurance in higher education: Internal, Interface, and Future quality waves. The Internal quality wave ensures that stakeholder confidence is maintained by improving internal processes such as teaching and learning. The Interface quality wave pertains to the concept of accountability of higher education towards the public. The future quality wave stresses the importance of ensuring relevance, content, and practices of higher education to future generations. This definition however, excludes the “enhancement”

component, as it merely concentrates on quantifying minimum requirements needed for assuring quality (Elassy, 2015).

Several other descriptions of the term quality assurance highlight the view that quality assurance is a series of procedures, strategies or plans achieved externally through quality assurance organizations and accrediting bodies, or internally within organizations (Borahan & Ziarati, 2002; Vlăsceanu et al., 2007). A few other researchers have conceptualized quality assurance from the angle of improvement (Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2004). Martin & Stella (2007) state that establishing more specific and multi-dimensional descriptions of quality assurance might be advantageous for achieving better transparency and ensuring better agreement on the definition and purpose of quality assurance. El Khawas et.al, (1998) suggest that quality assurance systems should ensure that institutional capability is determined based on standards and opinions of review teams. At the institutional level the aim should be to assess whether the institution as a whole is meeting its objectives and has appropriate mechanisms to mitigate risks. At the program level, the assessment should focus on developing and offering degree programs that are comparable internationally.

While there are several models for quality assurance systems, Massaro (2010) argues that the core elements for effective quality assurance should:

- make a difference to students both through measurement of learning outcomes and the value that has been added
- demonstrate institutional ownership of the process
- be relevant to the purpose of higher education and promote diversity
- be a cyclic process rather than sporadic snapshots
- be conducted by national and international peers
- be conducted at subject or program levels
- contain international comparative measures
- be reported in terms that are easily understood by the public

The architecture of an external evaluation procedure thus depends on the socio-political structure of society, and is deeply rooted in specific environments and cultures in which higher education institutions exist. It is therefore logical that the global context of quality assurance and

authorization processes is introduced before demonstrating that a different observation emerges within the UAE's higher education sector.

2.3.2 Global Context: Authorization of Higher Education

In so far as the scope of quality assurance is concerned, it varies across countries. The variation reflects its territorial coverage, frequency of initiation of quality assurance procedures, and the focus of the quality review. For example, the French model uses external reviewers to validate its institutions and programs and follows a summative approach primarily satisfying the accountability function. Other countries such as those in Latin America, Korea, Greece, Netherlands etc. have also adopted the accountability driven approach. In the UK, peer review forms the basis of institutional and program validation but the focus is on program effectiveness, teaching and learning, and outcomes of higher education. It follows a formative approach where the purpose is to promote performance. In addition, accountability is addressed indirectly through the granting of University title, degree awarding powers, as well as publication of standardized performance data to assist student choice (Santiago, Tremblay and Arnal, 2008). In the USA, one finds a combination of the above approaches in that it uses both self and peer evaluation with an increasing focus on assessment of student learning. Similar variations are evident across various other countries, where the dual requirement of accountability and improvement and the ambivalence of purposes are tackled differently. Against this background, it would be appropriate to discuss the current situation of quality assurance approaches in higher education in Europe, USA, and a few other developing countries.

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) engages quality assurance organizations from its member states in conducting periodic evaluations. The member states of ENQA comprise of multiple quality assurance agencies and the scope their activities differ. The European University Association's Institutional Evaluation program (EUA-IEP) follows a formative evaluation strategy aiming to strengthen institutional autonomy and support institutional change in universities. Spain, for example, has multiple quality assurance agencies. The Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency, AQU Catalunya, is the main instrument for the promotion and assurance of quality in the Catalan higher education area. The Spanish system follows an intense QA process for study programmes, which includes a desk-based analysis by a

group of experts. A successful review results in the programme being included in the register of the Government Ministry. Besides, annual monitoring is conducted by higher education institutions and supervised by the QAA. It also conducts an ex-post accreditation activity in which experts visit higher education institutions and assess the quality of study programmes.

In Germany, quality assurance procedures such as accreditation was introduced in the twenty-first century. The accreditation structure has two levels: the overarching level is represented by the Accreditation Council (Foundation for the Accreditation of study Programmes in Germany) with representatives of the sixteen (16) federal states of Germany, higher education institutions, student associations and employers, and the second level are the Accreditation Agencies that is governed by the Accreditation Council (Damian et al, 2015). The accreditation procedure follows a peer review and stakeholder approach. The focus is on compliance and follows well-defined standards and criteria. In Romania, external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes is performed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). The external evaluation focuses on three quality domains: institutional capacity, educational effectiveness and quality management. External evaluation is conducted at the institutional and program levels using standards and performance indicators. The evaluation results in a Report providing a judgement on the consequences of the evaluation. It is then presented to the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research (MECS), which implements the Agency's decisions.

FINEEC the government agency in Finland conducts enhancement-led evaluations. It comprises an Evaluation Council, a Higher Education Evaluation Committee and units for the evaluation of general education, vocational education and training, and higher education. FINEEC does not try to highlight shortcomings in its higher education system but helps institutions to develop their own quality system further. Evaluation Reports are published in full-length online and includes statements on strengths, recommendations and good practices of the institution. A highlight of FINEEC's model of quality assurance is that midway through its six-year audit cycle, it conducts follow-up seminars for institutions where interim reports on QA systems are prepared and, discussed and compared with other higher education institutions. This benchmarking exercise takes place outside the formal evaluation process, and have been very informative and enlightening for its institutions. FINEEC also publishes meta-evaluation reports periodically

from audit reports that draw wider conclusions of the state of quality assurance in the country (Kajaste, Prades and Scheuthle; 2015).

In the USA, Higher Education Institutions are accredited by one of the nineteen recognized institutional accrediting organizations and programmes are accredited by approximately sixty recognized programmatic accrediting organizations. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) representing US accreditation reviews these agencies for quality. Accreditation follows a self-study, peer-review, site-visit, and judgement on the accreditation status. Although accreditation is a non-governmental activity in the USA, the Government uses it as a tool to make decisions on institutional funding.

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), is the Quality assurance agency in India that conducts institutional and program reviews of higher education institutions throughout the country. Institutional accreditation focuses on the Higher Education Institution's Governance structure along with all its constituent departments. Program accreditation is for a specific department or school and is performed by subject experts. NAAC uses a peer review approach, and follows certain criteria and indicators as the basis of its assessment procedures. The results of the accreditation exercise is a combination of qualitative and quantitative metrics which is combined to develop a detailed report which is published online by the Agency in addition to mandating the Higher Education Institution to display it on its website. NAAC also conducts state-wise analysis of its accreditation reports periodically. These reports project state-level scenarios of quality assurance in higher education. State-wise/ region-wise analysis of accreditation reports are important in understanding state-level scenarios of quality assurance in higher education and help the State Governments/Departments of collegiate education/universities to plan their future activities regarding quality assurance and enhancement, based on the recommendations that emanate from such analyses.

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) implements a two-stage institutional accreditation system. The Quality Audit Manual developed in 2008 guided the implementation of Stage 1 of institutional accreditation. It then developed the Institutional Standards Assessment Manual in the first quarter of 2016 to guide the implementation of Stage 2. While the quality

audit in Stage 1 is formative, Stage 2 is summative. In stage 1, higher education institutions prepare a self-study of its processes against its own goals and objectives. This is reviewed by an External Audit Panel which then produces a quality audit report with recommendations for improvement, affirmations of compliance, or commendations of good practices. During Stage 2 institutions prepare a Self-study, but this time based on established quality standards. The review by external experts determines if an institution has met the established quality standards to be eligible for accreditation. (Paquibut, 2017).

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) audits universities against both the institution's own objectives and the protocol provisions. While the evaluation in Cycle 1 is minimal, the latter evaluation has detailed requirements to be fulfilled to be granted university status. AUQA's audits focus on specific areas or generally cover course and program approval and monitoring, teaching and assessment, research activities and outputs, overseas operations, including comparability of standards, staff development and student support, communication with stakeholders and systematic internally initiated reviews, including the rigor and effectiveness of the review mechanisms employed. (Woodhouse and Stokes, 2010). Schematic summaries of audit reports of AUQA are published to assist the agency and its Board to gain an overview of the QA process and its effectiveness across the Australian higher education system.

Billing (2004) explored international comparisons of external quality assurance frameworks of different countries and concluded that although a "general model" does not exist, most elements of quality assurance are applied in differing variations determined by the size of the higher education sector, the purpose of quality assurance, flexibility in the laws of the country, and its stage of development. Van Vught and Westerheijden (1993) reported that common elements of higher education evaluation exist in Netherlands, France and the UK:

- An independent national quality assurance agency to support higher education institutions without Government interference
- Self-evaluation as the primary focus of external evaluation
- External peer-review including a site-visit
- Public reports of evaluations
- Dissociating funding of HEI's from the results of QA evaluations

The OECD report comparing quality assessment in fourteen countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK) concluded that an element of convergence of QA frameworks existed. There was however a notable difference in the methods used by these countries to assure the quality of higher education provision. These variations were in the context of self-evaluation, institutional quality assurance, and external evaluation reports. (Brennan and Shah, 2000).

Kinser and Lane (2017) in their paper commissioned for the Global Education Monitoring Report examined the historical development as well as recent activity in different countries on regulatory schemes and mechanisms of ensuring quality in higher education. Historically, institutions of higher education were chartered by a Royal or Church decree, or had a constitutional ranking as an independent division of the state. They enjoyed special privileges and the legislature had no direct control over its operations. In Europe for example, approving degree types in higher education was a function exclusively regulated at the national level. The change to this process was evident after the Bologna process which enabled the introduction of comparable first and second cycles (Bachelors and Masters) in the European Higher Education Area (Schwarz and Westerheijden, 2007).

The growth of the tertiary education system and proliferation of private institutions have necessitated institutions of higher education throughout the world to develop some form of authorization from a government entity to function and award recognized degrees. Lemaitre (2008) states that quality assurance with its dual requirement of accountability and improvement is tackled through three main approaches (cited in Raouf and Ahmed, 2008):

- Quality Control through licensing
- Accountability through Accreditation / Assessments
- Improvement through Audits

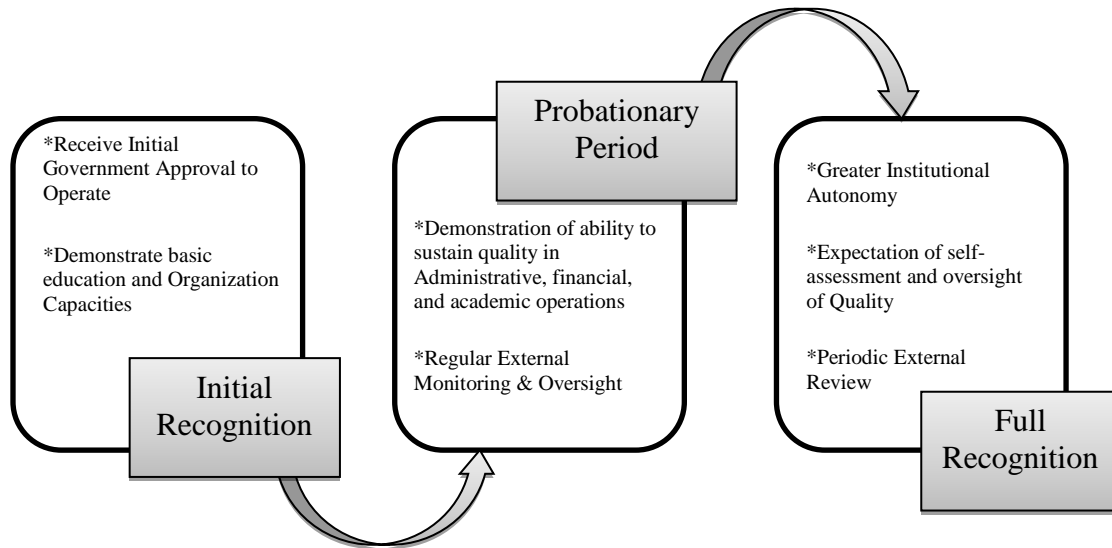
Licensing: A basic authorization granted to higher education institutions to operate based on evaluation by the quality assurance agency that they meet threshold standards designed for the purpose. In the United States, institutional accreditation as well as program accreditation is practiced (Eaton, 2012).

Accreditation and Assessment: Accreditation is the most popular form of quality evaluation well-suited to serve accountability objectives. The focus of accreditation is on minimum standards to be met and is required for institutions to operate and/or offer a program. It is also a prerequisite in many countries to be eligible for public funding. Assessment procedures are popular in countries like China, Finland, France, Norway, Portugal, Spain, etc. While accreditation is mandatory to establish a new institution/program, assessment procedures ensure an on-going need for accountability. These evaluations are either mandatory, or carried out on a periodic basis according to the regulations of specific quality assurance systems.

Audits: These are improvement-driven processes carried out at the institutional level. The emphasis of audits is on processes rather than on outcomes with a greater internal locus of control. Audits ensure that institutions establish internal quality mechanisms to reinforce the improvement function of quality assurance.

Practices for external quality assurance vary from one quality assurance system to another. QAA's may use all of the three approaches discussed above or any one according to individual arrangements. These approaches are not mutually exclusive and most systems have elements of all of them but with varying priorities within specific national and institutional contexts. Implementing a quality assurance procedure requires defining a set of concrete measures (e.g., documentation of standards or criteria) and written procedures on how to achieve them. Such reference is generally provided in the form of general guidelines, policies, minimum standards, and specific guidelines for national requirements. In general however, quality in higher education is addressed at the institutional or at the discipline/ program level. At the institutional level these arrangements are usually termed as licensing or institutional accreditation. The process grants a basic authorization for higher education institutions to operate following the evaluation by a QAA that they meet threshold standards designed for such recognition. A typical approval process of a higher education institution is shown in the figure 3 below:

FIGURE 3: CYCLE OF APPROVAL OF HEI'S (KINSER AND LANE, 2017)



The requirements for initial approval to operate differ between systems, but often include the institution evidencing solid plans on the proposed levels or degree programs to be offered, the number of projected students, the financial firmness of the institution, projected structures of administration, and the membership and credentials of those involved in the governance and senior management of the institution. Subsequently, when the institution has ensured a basic level of quality in its educational and managerial competencies, it needs to inform its stakeholders about the quality of its operations. The institution offers consistent and continuing progress reports and undergoes site visits from external examiners. If the results of accreditation are positive, the institution is granted full authorization by the quality assurance agency and then anticipated to contribute in consistent cycles of external quality assurance process.

2.2.3 The Ministry Authorization Process in the UAE

For an external quality assurance processes to be effective, there must be standards for measuring quality. These are normally institutionalized by the Quality assurance Agency set at the national level and implemented on higher education institutions through its evaluation procedures. In the UAE, the Ministry of Education (through the CAA) has the responsibility for quality assurance of tertiary education and implements it through its external evaluation processes following the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. At the heart of the CAA's

external evaluation processes are the Standards themselves against which applicants (institutions/programs) are judged on the basis of a self-study report and a site-visit. The Procedural Guidelines (2011) published by the CAA is a useful tool that offers guidance to institutions as to the expectations of the CAA and in preparing self-study reports for the purpose of external evaluation. The Standards are regarded as benchmarks of good professional practice and form threshold quality criteria that institutions are expected to follow in order to be authorized. Fertig (2007) states that the “duality” that exists between the Self-study and the Standards is the context in which institutions begin an extended period of self-learning. The External Quality Assurance process in the UAE employs four basic processes (figure 4). These processes are: (1) Initial Licensure (2) Initial Accreditation (3) Renewal of Licensure, and (4) Renewal of Accreditation

2.2.3.1 Initial Licensure

Initial Licensure grants a higher education institution the permit to operate in the UAE. The regulations governing the process are published in the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. The process requires an applicant institution to demonstrate that it has the capacity to offer quality programs. Institutional capacity is judged in terms of the institution’s physical infrastructure, adequacy of human resources, financial soundness, and other facilities supporting teaching and learning. Initial Licensure is granted for up to five years and the institution is required to identify its licensed status in all official publications and public advertisements. An institution can begin offering academic programs only after it has obtained initial licensure.

2.2.3.2 Initial Accreditation

On obtaining initial licensure, an institution becomes eligible to apply for initial accreditation of its starting academic programs. The accreditation process is quite significant for the CAA in that it requires significant level of engagement on the part of institutions. Initial Accreditation ensures the appropriateness of an academic program or module of study. It involves an evaluation of the appropriateness of the curriculum, appropriateness of the learning process, pedagogic approach, and quality of teaching staff. In addition, the institution is required to demonstrate its commitment to support the program and document the ways in which quality will be assured. Initial accreditation grants a formal recognition for an academic program as having met certain

minimum criteria within each standard. Peer-review or external review is a significant element of CAA's accreditation process. The CAA invites international subject experts to form its review panel in order to ensure that the program is comparable to international standards.

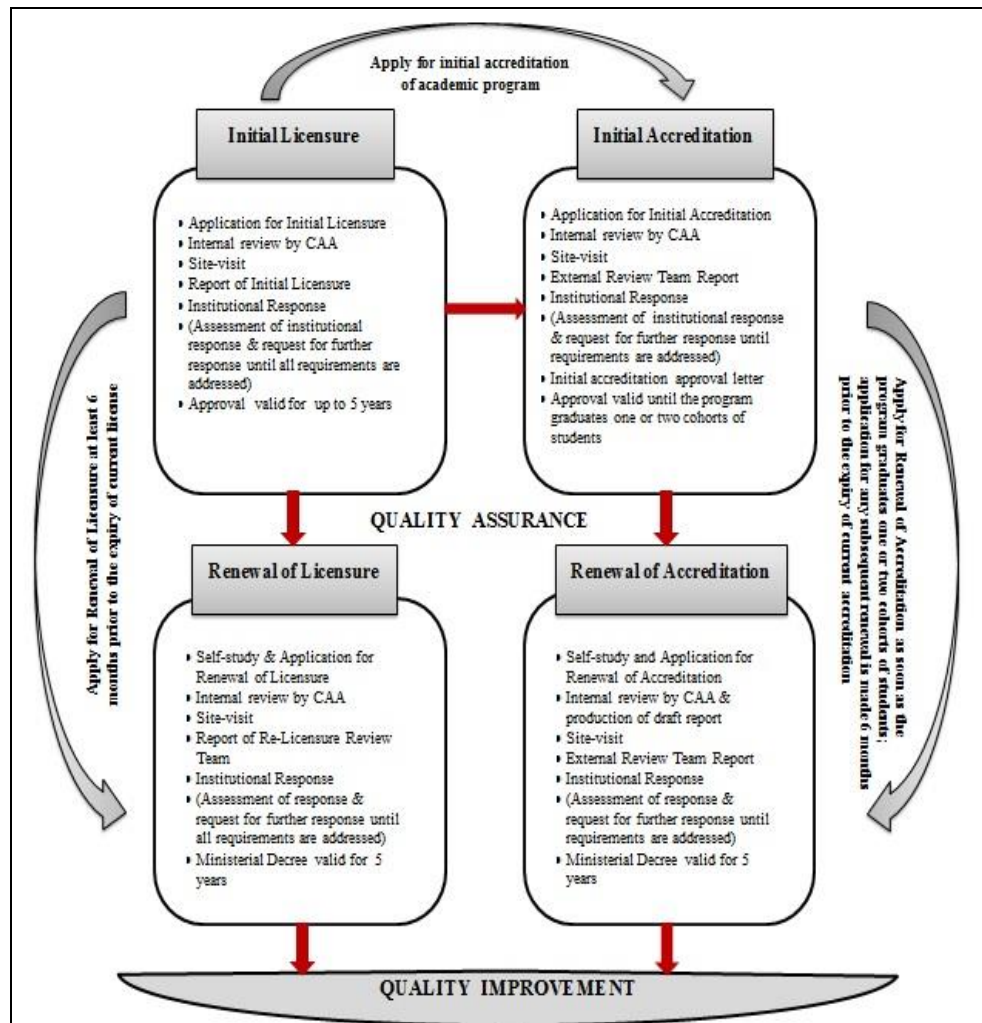
2.2.3.3 Renewal of Accreditation:

An institution submits its Application for Renewal of Accreditation after the program has graduated sufficient number of students from its initial cohorts. The Application follows the structure of the Standards; however, they are much more detailed and evidence-based than an Initial Accreditation Application. The Application is in the form of a detailed Self-study which provides systematized and comparable information as well as detailed self-critical appraisals of how the program is demonstrating compliance with the Standards and delivering expected outcomes. The strengths and weaknesses of the academic unit are analyzed and strategies devised in an attempt to improve quality. It is again through this Self-study report that the External Review Team provisionally evaluates the program before the actual site-visit. Evaluation by an ERT provides an outside perspective of the quality of the program. In drawing conclusions from the site visit, the ERT relies on the Self-study, on-site observations, and personal interviews with internal and external stakeholders. Once the ERT Report is forwarded to the institution, the process for subsequent follow-up of responses continues until the institution satisfactorily addresses all requirements raised by the ERT. The official notice of Renewal of Accreditation is a letter from the CAA which is normally valid for five years.

2.2.3.4 Renewal of Licensure

An application for Renewal of Licensure also requires a self-assessment or a self-study that includes a critical analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the institution as a whole and its sub-units. The renewal of licensure process basically aims at strengthening the management capacity of the institution. The Application comprises up-to-date versions of much of the documentation submitted for Initial Licensure. The process for Renewal of Licensure is similar to that for Initial Licensure involving the recruitment of external experts, site-visit, and Re-Licensure Report. When the CAA is satisfied that the institution has adequately addressed all of the issues raised by the Review Team, it passes a recommendation for renewal of licensure. The official notice of approval is a Ministerial Decree valid for five years.

FIGURE 4: EXTERNAL EVALUATION PROCESS OF THE CAA (ADAPTED BY AUTHOR)



2.4 Theories Supporting Impact Evaluation of HEI's

This study considers a combination of theories in social sciences that introduce changes to the higher education landscape originating from external regulations and how higher education institutions make sense of the evaluation process in dealing with accountability and improvement. The three dominant theories that influence external evaluation are:

- The New Public Management Theory
- The Neo-Institutional Theory
- Organizational Behavior Theory

The above theories have contrasting views as the first one largely supports the agenda of policy makers and the government, and the second and third ones support the agenda of institutions and its members. Bringing these three constructs on the same analytical plane will provide this research with a comprehensive view of the impact of external regulation on higher education institutions. The push from new public management toward new institutionalism show how regulations and control have seeped into academia. But if these changes have been toward improvement resulting in continuous quality decisions, or remained merely ritualistic is what determines the impact of external quality assurance.

2.4.1 The New Public Management Theory

The New Public Management (NPM) theory is said to have gained attention in the late 1980's. It descended from the neo-liberal ideas contesting democracy and government policies in areas where the quality of public services were deteriorating (Bessant, Robinson and Ormerod, 2015). The theory is based on the principles of economic liberalization, free trade, open market, privatization and deregulation. The goal of NPM is to increase efficiency and value for money in public services, and hence is applicable to higher education (Boutellier and Tahar, 2013; Pollitt, 2003). It is also seen as a paradigm that pays attention to implementation leading to a shift from public administration to public management or state managerialism (Clarke and Newman, 1997). In discussing the effects of NPM in higher education, Bessant, Robinson and Ormerod (2015) state how the “nudging” and “steering” mechanisms leverage higher education developments. The NPM has led governments to pay more attention to market forces and competition, and improved information sharing and cooperation among its constituents. Similar to its application in varied fields, the NPM is refashioning the way universities are managed making them more business-like with relationships and roles defined in business terms, an increased focus on outputs, strategic planning, efficiency, value for money, competition for research funds, the drive to maintain and increase student enrolments - all resulting in a more structured, controlled and monitored institutional regime. Neave (1988) interpreted these developments on the higher education landscape as the “Rise of the Evaluative State” with an output orientation.

The NPM also increased transparency of government functions, and the proliferation of accountability and quality assurance of higher education institutions through accreditation and audit processes performed by public bodies established by the Government. Quality assurance

processes serve as a key mechanism of centralized NPM control over teaching and learning ensuring that universities remain accountable, yet independent (Bessant, Robinson and Ormerod, 2015). It stands by its notion that market mechanisms promote efficiency and effectiveness of higher education institutions. Students are viewed as customers and quality assessment is implemented to ensure that education meets the needs of students. It also created the need for institutions to monitor institutional performance against policy objectives. In the case of UAE higher education, the explosion in private universities necessitated the establishment of a regulatory mechanism to ensure the quality of higher education provision in the country. The CAA, which is the quality assurance agency of the UAE regulates and monitors higher education quality through its licensure, accreditation and audit processes. The CAA's Standards for Licensure and Accreditation provide threshold requirements that must be met for recognition of institutions and their degree programs. In summary, these changes in higher education are linked to a growing interest in quality and have become one of the main components of institutional and political agendas of countries world over.

2.4.1.1 Criticisms Surrounding New Public Management

Application of the New Public Management theory is criticized on the pretext that it is more than a decade old and that its impact on societies are now becoming much clearer. The theory was originally considered important because it aimed at improving the effectiveness of the Government to respond to the changing demands of society. However, countries that applied the NPM philosophies have started reaping its outcomes and these criticisms are based on observed realities (Atreya and Armstrong, 2002). The main criticisms of NPM are based on three counts- (1) that private sector management techniques do not apply to the public sector because of their unique political, ethical, constitutional and social dimensions (Flynn, 2007); (2) Giving more authority to public managers may lead to centralized decision-making which is against the notion of NPM; and (3) Privatization could prove difficult to manage in developing countries due to lack of administrative capacity. Research on higher education however has shown mixed reactions to the implementation of New Public Management concepts. For example, Gosling and Andrea (2001) observed that despite enormous growth in national Quality Assurance systems in the United Kingdom, their effectiveness in achieving lasting quality improvement is

questionable. Shabani (1995) argued that quality of university education in Africa has deteriorated despite the efforts of the government to solve the system's basic problems.

In contrast to these observations, Silva, Reich and Gallegos (1997) noted that the process of higher education evaluation has showed positive effects leading to change in institutional culture in Chile. A subsequent study conducted by Lemaitre (2004), showed evidence of cultural change. It was reported that the formal quality assurance scheme is endorsed by most stakeholders in Chile. Gerbic and kranenburg (2003) also reported that external evaluation impacted positively on new program development in New Zealand. Szanto (2005) in an evaluation of external quality assurance agencies across three continents reported that external evaluation is a powerful means of assuring and enhancing the quality of operations of external agencies themselves. In the UAE, the external review report of an International Advisory Committee of INQAAHE, reported that external evaluations were unanimously seen as strengthening the programs and institutions and the reflections of institutional representatives are a testament to the positive impact of the CAA reviews on academic quality (unpublished Report, 2010).

2.4.2 The Neo-Institutional Theory

Institutional theories emphasized the dependability of modern organizations on their external environments. The academic roots of the application of new-institutionalism may be traced to the works of John Meyer and Scott (1983), and DiMaggio & Powell (1983). The re-coining of the term to “new institutionalism” was particularly due to the renewed attention given to cultural-cognitive systems (Scott, 2010). New institutionalism recognizes that higher education institutions operate in an open system which is constantly influenced by the external environment. According to Zammuto (1982, p.34), a higher education institution as an open system has the following characteristics:

- It is nested within a larger system
- It works through a continuous flow of inputs, transformation, and outputs
- It maintains stability internally while adjusting to external conditions needed for survival.
- It has a complex feedback and regulatory mechanism that responds to changes in environment

- Social activities are viewed as patterned cycles of events rather than the behaviors of individuals

In general, higher education institutions are seen as adaptive systems, in which growth occurs as a result of the interaction between the external environment and the system's subparts, or among the subparts themselves. The Institutional Theory emerged as one of the main theoretical perspectives to understand an institution's response to rules, beliefs and practices that relate to its wider external environment. An organization's environment is categorized as the task environment which consists of all factors that are unique to the organization (e.g., customers, suppliers, competitors, regulatory agencies), and the institutional environment (e.g. social, cultural, political, technological and demographic forces) that consists of factors influencing all organizations in the society. However, it was later argued that there are broader ways in which institutional forces shape organizational arrangements by permeating into the latter (Scott, 2010). For example, legitimacy has remained a central concept in organizational institutionalism. Organizations seek legitimacy by imbibing policies, rules, and regulations of the prevailing institutional environment (Meyer and Rowan, 1997). This then becomes a basis of survival which grants them easy access to resources and to compete effectively. Organizational legitimacy is achieved through symbolic behavior. From the view point of external evaluation, institutions ceremonially adapt to an accreditation review for the purpose of being accredited by the external agency.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) highlighted three factors - coercive, normative, and mimetic processes of structural reproduction. While coercive factors are the result of political and state pressures combined with strict regulatory controls, normative factors emerge from the influence of professions and primary function of the organization. Mimetic forces are the result of an organization's response to uncertainty and the adoption or influence of specific existing practices. The concept of isomorphism, a central element of the neo-institutional theory, can be used to explain institutional phenomena. Schwarz and Westerheijden (2004) explain how quality assurance which until the 1970s was controlled through bureaucratic means was replaced by a new isomorphism drive to mimic the new management tool that became successful in the Japanese economy (Papadimitriou and Westerheijden, 2011). It was also a common phenomenon to copy whatever seemed successful in US higher education. This phenomenon is also evident in

many other countries, including the UAE. Armstrong (2012) states that the UAE took guidance from the Criteria for Accreditation of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in developing its initial Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. The works of DiMaggio and Powell set the arena for subsequent work on isomorphism.

As external regulations are institutionalized, organizational structures become more homogenous. Meyer and Rowan (1977) state that when organizations are pressurized to adapt to societal rationalized myths, they decouple their practices from their formal existing structures and superficially adopt new structures without implementing related practices. Hasse and Krücken (2007) state that the concept of decoupling was not defined by Meyer and Rowan (1977) but was a contribution of other prominent sociological theories of the time such as the contingency theory of Perrow (1972) and the sense-making theory of Weick (1976). Through decoupling, organizations achieve legitimacy without actually adapting to changes which results in the loss of confidence and good faith (Hasse and Krücken, 2007). In summary, rules are established symbolically, but without practical application resulting in a separation of what is declared and what is implemented. This means that change is mostly related to formal and visible structures and processes.

The Neo-institutional Theory thus provides the required context to understand organizational behavior i.e., how institutions react to events triggered by external factors such as external evaluation. It is, sometimes considered as a theory about why institutions do not change, or do not change as intended (Hanken, 2011). That is, it is difficult to understand why some institutions change easily while others do not in spite of experiencing the same external pressure. M. Sauder and W.N. Espeland (2009, p. 63) claim that “decoupling is not determined solely by the external enforcement of institutional pressures or the capacity of organizational actors to buffer or hide some activities. Members’ tendency to internalize these pressures, to become self-disciplining, is also salient in organizations (Austen, 2016). Hence, consideration of the organizational behavioral theory will give a basis for understanding of these issues.

2.4.2.1 Criticisms Surrounding New-Institutionalism

Criticisms of new institutionalism relate to those in new public management research. Suddaby (2010) argues that the neo-institutional theory has been expanded far beyond its technical goals. Palmer, Biggart and Dick (2008) support a similar view that new institutionalism's penetrating insights are at risk of being lost when it incorporates multiple disciplines, and operates at multiple levels of analysis. However in a later study, Suddaby, Seidl and Lê (2013) support the growing complementarity of combining theories by moving away from the traditional understanding of a rational structure to studying the lived experience of individuals in an organization. Another criticism of the theory relates to the idea of decoupling. Weijen (2014) discuss apparent discrepancies of decoupling in the context of socio-environmental governance, drawing on the distinction between "policy-practice decoupling" and "means-ends decoupling". Hack and Schoeneborn (2014) in response to this criticism posit that "means-ends decoupling" is very different from the phenomenon of "policy-practice decoupling" and, most fundamentally, is inconsistent with a social-constructionist account of decoupling. They assert that attempts to discuss remedies for the discrepancy between means and ends threaten to stretch institutional theory towards functionalism, thus neglecting its phenomenological origins.

While the perspectives of new public management studies in higher education is that of policy makers, new institutionalism studies show the view from the bottom (i.e., of academic staff). The impact of new institutionalism is best visible through well-cited, peer reviewed empirical research as well as theoretical re-formulations. Most research using this approach tends to be comparative, cross-national, and historical, and evidence is mostly quantitative in nature. For example, in a research conducted by Watty (2006) among faculty members in 39 Australian universities, it was reported that quality in education had declined. Rosa, Tavares and Amaral (2006) reported a lesser degree of optimism among academic staff towards the external evaluation process. In his widely quoted work Newton (2000) argues that if academics are to remain the main instruments to improve quality of teaching, then more attention needs to be paid by external quality bodies and institutions to the conditions and context of academic's work. In a subsequent study, Newton (2002) reported that while academics may either adapt or resist external evaluation, they have remained active participants in the quality assurance process. A later study by Seema, Udam and Mattisen (2016) on Estonian Higher Education Institutions

revealed that academic staff perceived external evaluation to be important in that it raises awareness of the weaknesses in the system, but they also see it as a controlling measure which restricts improvement.

2.4.3 Organizational Behavior Theory

In the context of higher education, Organizational Behavioral Theory supports the notion that institutions react differently to influences caused by external factors and the interest is in studying interactions between individuals and their behavior. Most scholarship exploring quality in higher education assumes that rationality is the justification that motivates quality related decisions and institutional practices. It is a stand-point that promotes the use of quantitative data and measurement to ensure accountability (Kappler, 2004). This perspective is seen in the processes that support the development and maintenance of academic standards through quality assurance frameworks (Bloxham, 2012). The implementation of quality assurance principles and practices within higher education institutions affect key organizational elements such as their structure, strategy and culture. Institutional change is initiated in two ways- one that is an imposed change, usually triggered by external factors such as outcomes of an external quality assurance process and the second type of change is a voluntary change that happens within institutions. The latter places academics at the centre of any reform rather than viewing them as mere implementers.

Institutions thus comprise a mixture of diverse elements – some bound by their own rules, others by standards imposed on them by external elements. When these are harmoniously nested within one another they serve the purpose of quality assurance and improvement. However, Fullan (2001) states that regardless of the direction in which change occurs; it results in anxiety, loss, and struggle. Internal institutional practices determine if a practice becomes a routine part of organizational life or remains a symbol of legitimacy. Thus a micro-focus at the individual level analysis of the mechanisms used by institutional members can help understand the “guts” of institutions in relation to the neo-institutional theory (Sinthcombe 1997). According to Svyantek & Deshon (1993), the two complementary survival functions that support organizational culture are its adaptation to external change, and the development of a stable internal identity.

2.4.4 Relevance of the Theories to the Current Study

The influence of the three theories denotes that attempts to push a managerial approach (as implied by new public management) to higher education have been met with mixed reactions. At the same time, there remains a strong commitment to autonomy and academic freedom (as implied by new institutionalism) which causes a drift in quality assurance procedures. The multiplicity of stakeholder interpretations of quality also reveals the existence of significant symbolic activity within higher education institutions rendering technologies such as total quality management as higher education fads. The current dichotomy between these theories creates mixed views on the impact of external evaluation and as a result our understanding of it has remained vague. This thesis combines the three perspectives to expand our understanding of the impact of external evaluation on the UAE's higher education system. A comparison of the three theories and its relevance to the current study is provided in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF THE THEORIES AND MAPPING THEIR RELEVANCE TO THE STUDY

	New Public Management Theory	Neo-Institutional Theory	Organizational Behaviour Theory
Major Proponents	Hood Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Pollit (2001)	Zucker (1977) John Meyer and Scott (1983) DiMaggio & Powell (1983).	Birnbaum (1988) Bolman and Deal (2008)
Basic tenets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External pressure is needed to increase competitiveness & diversity of institutions - Emphasis on rational decision making, shift to state managerialism - Promotes standardization of quality assurance - Effective mechanism for problem-solving - Strong academic leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External pressure may lead to isomorphism and homogeneity of higher education institutions - Power struggles are part of quality activities - Effective in problem-setting - Promotes faculty autonomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focus on organizational behaviour and structure within a particular cultural context. - emphasizes the importance of shared practices across the institutional community - culture, rituals and analogies used to make sense of ambiguous situations (symbolic interactionism)
Limitations/ Criticisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Old and out-dated & impact is showing-up in most countries (Atreya & Armstrong, 2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expansion of the theory beyond its techno-rational goal, may result in loss of the theory's traditional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literature is generally positive on the implementation of multiple frame models

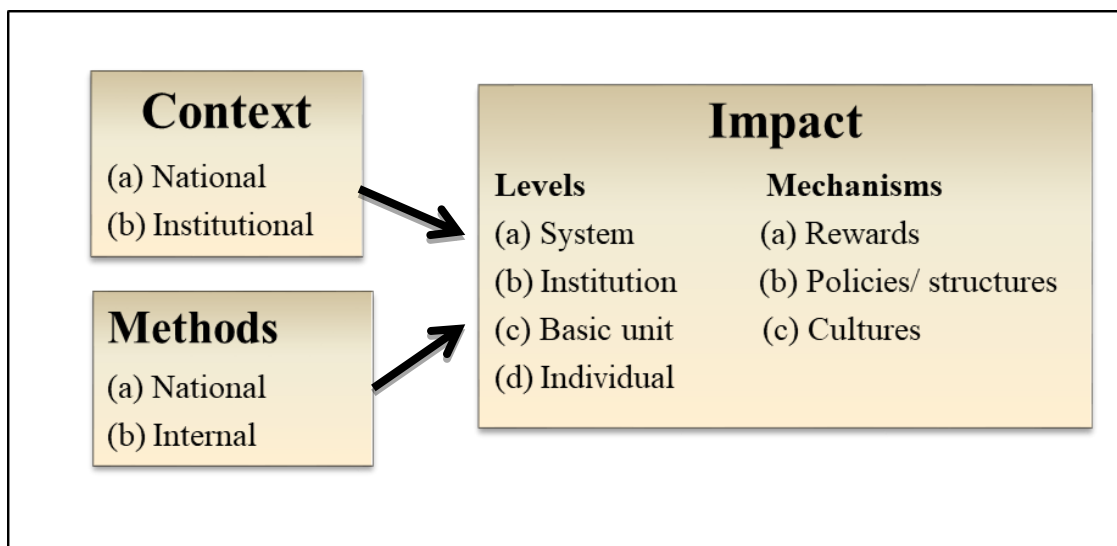
	New Public Management Theory	Neo-Institutional Theory	Organizational Behaviour Theory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cannot apply private sector management practices to public sector (Flynn, 2002) - In higher education – no or little impact (Gosling & Andrea, 2001) 	<p>insights (Palmer, Biggart & Dick, 2008)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noted discrepancies in policy-practice decoupling and means-ends decoupling (Weijen, 2014) 	
Refutation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact of higher education shows positive effect on a few countries (Silva, Reic, Gallegos, 1997); (Lemaitre, 2004) - Evidence shows improved internal accountability systems (Luckett, 2010). Most contributions emphasize the need for different management measures to coordinate educational process (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growing support on moving away from traditional assumptions and embrace complementarily of theories, expand rational perspective to live experience of individuals (Suddaby, Seidl and Lê , 2013) - Mean-ends decoupling is an entirely different phenomenon with a functionalistic approach (Hack and Schoeneborn, 2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drawbacks in using single frames alone (Bolman and Deal, 2008)
Relevance to current study	<p>New public management had its influence on UAE higher education by establishing a regulatory mechanism to ensure the quality of higher education. The Standards for Licensure and Accreditation provide threshold requirements that must be met by UAE institutions for authorization. This study aims to study the impact of external evaluation on higher education institutions in the UAE.</p>	<p>The results of CAA accreditation provides evidence and reasons for the judgments reached. At the departmental level, a successful evaluation can enhance the status of the program. At the same time, it can become a threat if it challenges the interest of academics. Therefore, views of faculty members are important in analysing the impact of external quality assurance</p>	<p>Analysis of the cultural perspective offers powerful ways to understand if the impact of external evaluation has seeped at deeper level of internal activity or remained at a level of symbolic compliance</p>

One of the premises of the literature surrounding external quality assurance is that the extent of adoption of a quality assurance system depends on internal and external environments. Sociological theories have been useful in understanding how higher education institutions adapt to these pressures and bring about changes in internal operations. Stensaker (2007) urges researchers to question the purpose of quality assurance and the forces that drive the process when analyzing quality assurance.

2.5 EQA Impact Models and Frameworks

Although a number of impact studies on quality assurance at the national / institutional levels can be identified in the literature, only a few include a conceptual model or framework that explains the concept of external quality assurance. For example, Brennan and Shah (2000) used a conceptual model that distinguishes between the institutional level and the mechanism of impact. The model categorizes “level” as the basic unit (a course, department, or faculty), the institution, or the national system. Mechanisms are identified as rewards and incentives, policies and structures, and cultures (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5: IMPACT OF QUALITY ASSESSMENT (BRENNAN AND SHAH, 2000, PP.10)

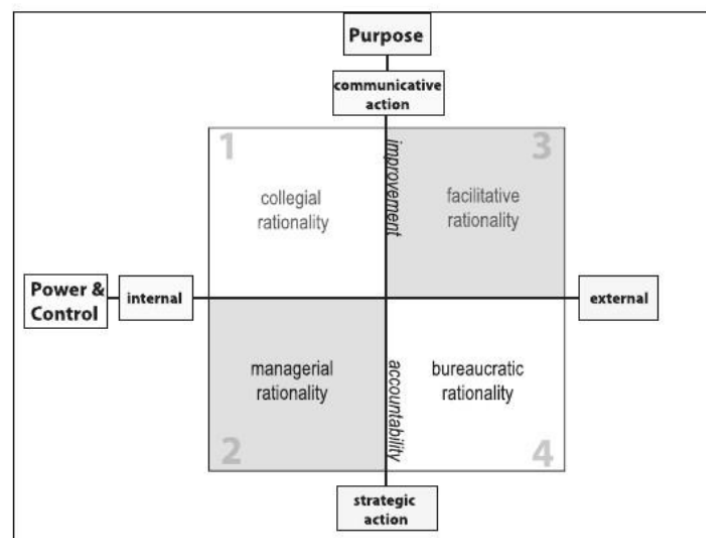


The framework above distinguishes the impact factor through rewards, through changing institutional policies, and through changing quality cultures. The model also emphasizes that the impact of EQA is a result of the methods used within the national and institutional context of the

assessment. However, in practice, it has been proven that the conceptions of quality can entail specific or combinations of these values in particular institutions and countries. It has been criticized on the grounds that the framework has only general analytical value, and cannot replace in-depth case studies of particular quality assurance systems (Barnett, 1999).

Lockett (2007) proposed a conceptual framework to assess quality in teaching and learning and how institutions deal with external demands of quality assurance (figure 6). The framework presents four quadrants: (1) Collegial rationality which presupposes that academics are in control of their professional work, and quality assurance is owned and controlled internally. (2) Managerial rationality which presupposes that a good management with explicit systems, policies and procedures, strategic planning, centralization and regulation is the key factor in productivity of successful institutions. (3) Facilitative rationality where the quality assurance criteria are controlled externally, and are improvement oriented, while the models used for measuring quality are internally owned by institutions, and (4) bureaucratic rationality which is external to the institution on which they are imposed. The purpose of quality assurance is usually accountability and control where the government initiates quality control and the process reflects the interest of the external quality agency.

FIGURE 6: LUCKETT'S FRAMEWORK OF EQA



The strength of Lockett's framework is the use of the term "rationality" emphasizing that there are various ways of thinking about quality assessment that lead to different approaches or

methods being adopted to study quality assurance. Inserting social transformation objectives into higher education evaluation strengthens the accountability dimension expressed in Luckett's model. However, critics argue that it has not diminished or weakened the trend of using external evaluation to steer higher education towards the goals set by the state. The likely appeal for academics in including a social transformation lens has generated mixed views despite the opportunity it poses to examine connections between education and outcomes (King, Marginson and Naidoo, 2011).

Ramirez (2013) suggested that the impact of quality assurance on higher education institutions can be viewed from three identifiable dimensions: Technical, Political, and Cultural/Symbolic. The technical or rational dimension of quality assurance implies that quality can be reduced to a series of steps with clearly identifiable actors, well-defined standards, and predictable outcomes. Accountability from a technical perspective is viewed as meeting minimum thresholds of quality. It is taken for granted that quality assurance as a technical endeavor is a beneficial and desirable concept. The Standards-based approach to accreditation focuses on the technical dimension of quality. Quality is viewed as a form of regulation and control, orderly sequenced procedures, and quality control measures through which power is exerted to achieve results. The technical perspective on quality promotes standardization and aims to reduce variation in the manner and approach to quality assurance. Examples of a technical approach to quality assurance are plentiful in the literature (e.g., Kinser, 2011; Eaton, 2009).

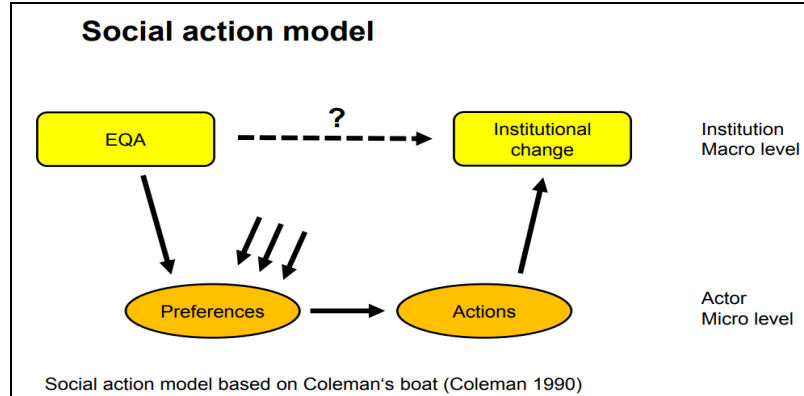
While the technical-rational dimension is built on logic of consequence, the political dimension is built on a logic of appropriateness (Hanken, 2011). The political dimension of quality assurance requires thinking beyond the boundaries of technical rationality by understanding the significance of informal relationships in institutions. The political perspective acknowledges that individuals in an institution may have competing interests and that quality evaluation may affect the balance of power and relationships within higher education systems (Brennan and Shah, 2000). It acknowledges that members are influenced by collectively anchored values, norms, routine, unwritten rules, traditions, and ways of thinking. For example, external evaluation involving peer review is central to the achievement of legitimacy for a QA process. The results of a review provide evidence and reasons for the judgments reached. At the departmental level, a successful evaluation can enhance the status of the program. At the same time, it may be

considered a threat if it challenges the interest of academic and subject groups. Accountability from a political perspective may also be viewed as a mechanism to limit institutional autonomy, and therefore may be resisted by academics. If institutional behavior is governed by the logic of appropriateness, then change becomes more complicated. In studying the impact of external quality assurance, it is therefore important to consider the views of academic faculty towards the accreditation activity.

While the technical perspective sees Standards as independent of individual interference, and the political perspective emphasizes the importance of academic power, some influences on quality assurance go beyond these perspectives and look at the symbolic side of quality assurance. The symbolic aspect of accreditation may be viewed from two angles - One angle emphasizes the importance of internal culture, and shared practices across the institutional community. The most important element of an institution's QA process is the presence of a quality assurance culture (Sidwell, 2014). He emphasizes that every individual in the institution should be involved in continual discussion, analysis and assessment of the quality of the institution, its operation and programs. From an alternative angle, the symbolic dimension of accreditation confers on institutions the prestige of being recognized by an authority which grants legitimacy to its programs. On the negative side, symbolic compliance may result when members of the institution assume the role of conformists to the external evaluation process - institutions tend to present themselves in the best possible light when being evaluated which is often far from everyday reality.

Scheuthle and Leiber (2015) proposed a social action model which demonstrates the interaction between institutions at a macro level and institutional actors at a micro level showing the process by which external quality assurance brings about institutional change (figure 7). The model builds on the Coleman's boat (Coleman, 1994, pp.8), which explains the macro-level phenomena (the environment, policy setting, evaluation context, and institutional changes), its relation to the micro-level phenomena (attitudes and preferences of individual members of the institution), and causal social mechanisms that brought about those phenomena.

FIGURE 7: SOCIAL ACTION MODEL (SCHEUTHLE AND LEIBER, 2015)



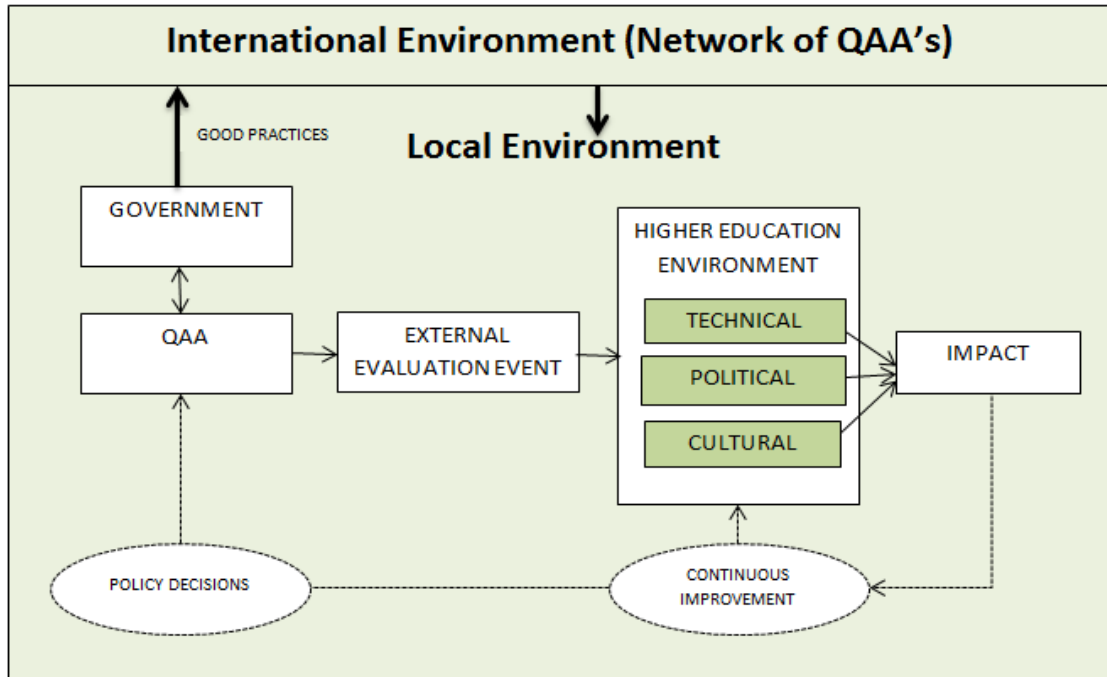
2.6 Conceptual Framework of this Study

In light of the Social Action model of Scheuthle and Leiber, 2015, and the three-frame model proposed by Ramirez (2013), this thesis explores if system-wide EQA mechanism in the UAE have brought about programmatic and cultural changes in institutions. Institutional licensure and program accreditation in the UAE are conducted within a framework of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. Accreditation Standards are applied across all institutions and programs in a transparent and consistent manner. The technical approach to quality assurance in the UAE acts as a central pillar to ensure minimum standards. However, it may seem insufficient because mere application of standard procedures for quality assurance may be ineffective when dealing with different interest groups that are constantly competing for scarce resources and power. The impacts of external evaluation on UAE institutions are thus studied from technical, political and cultural perspectives. The intention is to look not only if implementation of the UAE Standards for Licensure and Accreditation has led to improvements, as implied by the technical perspective, but to analyze how participants at the academic unit level framed their understanding of the process and the impact it has created. The enquiry penetrates further to a micro level to understand how institutions have embraced the changes introduced by external evaluation.

Literature is mainly positive on the theoretical application of multi-framework models. A multi-frame model originating from the organizational behavioral theory moves beyond the narrow, mechanical approaches to understanding organizations. When viewed separately, each of the frames have their own drawbacks. For example, if the political frame is viewed separately, it can focus too heavily on conflicts and mistrust instead of encouraging collaboration (Bolman and Deal, 2008). Studies that have used a multi-framework model have revealed positive benefits. For example, Fruehauf, Al-Khalifa and Coniker (2015) in developing a sound data governance strategy state that Bolman and Deal's Four Frame Model created the potential to uncover connections that would otherwise have remained hidden. Similarly, higher education institutions are complex organizations that need to be looked at from a variety of angles to obtain clarity. Sowell (2014) in his case study describes that Bolman and Deal's four frames helped analyze changes required to the organization structure, and that the political and symbolic frames would be put to greater use for planning and implementing further changes. Bolman and Deal explain that the use of multiple frames gains its importance in organizational study in asking a very simple question-"is technical quality important?" This question would lead to the thinking that a structural frame's focus on data and logic are essential to producing quality. At the same time, if technical quality should be acceptable to stakeholders, it is essential to look at a decision through the human resource and political perspectives as well (Bolman and Deal, 2008, p.318).

In the current study, assessing the impact of external quality assurance will therefore be analyzed from three different perspectives (technical, political and cultural) to obtain a holistic picture of changes that have occurred as a result of EQA (figure 8).

FIGURE 8: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS STUDY



The Researcher adopted a multi-level analysis design as this helps achieve a complete and balanced understanding of the impact of accreditation in the UAE. The theoretical grounding of this study in neo-institutionalism and adopting a mixed methods design to capture the impact of EQA from three dimensions, led to some assumptions. Most notably, it was hypothesized that quantitative analysis of External Review Team Reports (from a technical dimension) would be able to empirically capture data that shows changes and improvements from one accreditation cycle to the next. By placing academic staff at the center of change, the researcher captures the views of academic staff (from a political dimension) on their perceptions of the impact of EQA at the curricular domain. In looking at the symbolic side of quality assurance embedded in the organizational behavior theory, the views of Quality Assurance staff is expected to show how quality assurance practices have affected institutional structure, strategy, and culture. The framework postulates that if the outcomes of the external evaluation results in continuous improvement (as depicted with dotted lines) it would indicate a positive impact of EQA and in turn help the QA agency and the Government in formulating important policy decisions. A positive EQA procedure would imply that New Public Management efforts of the government have borne fruit.

2.7 Focus of Impact Evaluations

Quality assurance in higher education has many different facets and different perspectives. The literature conceptualizing the impact of quality assurance were researched with varied foci and using different methodologies. Impact evaluations are an indication of the quality of the QA agencies' work, and serves as a core element of evidence-base for policy decisions of the government. It sheds light on the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures on institutions, and how these contribute to the overall development of higher education. The scholarship on quality in higher education includes multiple approaches and areas of focus. Research is sometimes driven by the development and implementation of Standards and procedures focusing on the technical dimension of quality. Quality lacks variation from this perspective, is reduced to well-defined steps, and can predict the outcomes of a quality assurance process. The technical perspective is based on the tenet that standardization of procedures can contribute to efficiency, and that change and improvement are closely related. Therefore, the impact of quality assurance is measured based on how well pre-determined standards have been met.

Research on quality assurance has also focused on conflicts and power relations within institutions. Stakeholder analysis is typically used as a tool for studying informal relationships in institutions and interrogates how it results in power shifts as a result of quality assurance evaluations. This constitutes the political perspective of impact evaluations. The influence of quality evaluation has increased the pressure on academic staff to comply with the Standards in specific criteria related to teaching and learning, possibly resulting in lower morale, reduced intellectual commitment to teaching, and reluctance to motivate students (Dipardo and Potter, 2004). Research has shown that quality evaluation has increased a feeling of distrust in academic staff which can damage their commitment to the profession and confidence in their subject expertise (Cheng, 2011).

A third focus has been on the symbolic aspect of quality. Evaluations of this nature look at how well quality initiatives have embedded itself into the culture of the institution. It provides a framework to understand human interaction and institutional mannerisms to cope with change. To become a fundamental part of the lived-experience of members, quality assurance must become a fundamental and acceptable part of the higher education system. The challenge for

institutions is to develop QA practices that integrate the interests of internal and external stakeholders to achieve a balance between the institutions goals, and academic interests.

2.8 Impact of External Quality Assurance- Methodological Challenges

The quality assurance empire has grown steadily over the last twenty years. This has been accompanied by the thickening of global and regional networks such as the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA), and the Arab Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ANQAHE) etc. The central aim of these networks is to encourage information-sharing, good practices and thereby strengthen the concept of quality assurance in higher education. The efforts of these agencies have been furthered with on-going dialogues regarding higher education quality, its threats, and how to manage it effectively. According to Harvey and Williams (2010) there is a disappointing paucity of significant research into the impact of quality assurance processes. A similar view is expressed by Newton (2013) that impact evaluations of quality assurance processes are still “under-theorized and under-researched”. Grifoll (2016) supports the view that our knowledge about the impact of external quality assurance on higher education institutions is still rudimentary. Jarvis (2014) state that it is about time that the impact, outcomes, and benefits of the quality assurance approach be assessed and reported in tangible terms.

The paucity of impact evaluations in higher education relate to methodological challenges in conducting such studies. Leiber, Stensaker and Harvey (2015) state that Experimental Designs, Control Group Design (with and without comparison design), before-after comparison design, and ex-post analysis design have been the most commonly used methods in impact evaluations, although not all are applicable to higher education institutions. An experimental design is practically unfeasible in conducting impact analyses of quality assurance in higher education institutions as it assumes that an experiment can be reconstructed and tested in several other similar settings. Higher education institutions and their sub-units are constantly evolving and because of the complexity in comparing them in any relevant dimension, this design is practically unfeasible. The control group design requires a treatment group experiencing the intervention and another group that doesn't. This design is cumbersome, and has the difficulty of

identifying non-treatment groups, and in dealing with ethical issues. A before-after comparison design evaluates the state of the system before the intervention and then at a time period after the intervention. A limitation of this design is that it is difficult to tell with any amount of accuracy that the impact has been caused by the applied intervention and not because of other reasons. Analysis using an Ex-post design is carried out after the complete intervention has taken place. Documented data and stakeholder perceptions are typical sources of information used ex-post. This is the most common design used for impact analyses in higher education so far.

A second challenge is that QA evaluations may have manifold effects on individuals, organizational culture, and structure and processes. With limited resources, it gets cumbersome to study these in detail and obtain an in-depth picture of the impact. Third, higher education institutions are complex organizations that are embedded in different logics and it may get difficult to agree on a model for describing them or comparing them in any relevant dimension. Beerkens (2015) argues that the challenge for an impact evaluation can be threefold: (1) the outputs are numerous, difficult to define and even more difficult to measure (2) the effects can change over the timespan of the instrument, and (3) the lack of clarity in what change one is trying to capture. According to Kajaste et al., (2015) practical experience from impact evaluations has been that complete effects are visible only after a considerable time period since the intervention during which the institution might have been influenced by various other developmental factors.

Nevertheless, considerable efforts in this direction can be observed through empirical studies conducted in this area. For example, as part of its on-going engagement with various nations, the OECD suggests regulatory impact assessments to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of existing quality regulations. The ENQA also states the importance of impact evaluations by including it in its Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA, 2015). The importance of conducting large scale impact analyses is also highlighted in the observations of Westerheijden et al. (2007) and Volkwein et al. (2006). As systematic impact evaluations are very scarce and not easy to carry out, quality assurance agencies normally rely on hypotheses about potential impact. On the contrary, a systematic impact evaluation if carried out would help quality assurance agencies to evaluate the

effectiveness of their procedures (Kajaste, Prades and Scheuthle, 2015). In particular, they can reveal:

- the kinds of intended and unintended impact that their procedures produce
- in which stage(s) QA procedures actually produce an impact
- which part of the procedure produces the most impact, and
- the contribution of quality assurance procedures in enhancing the quality of higher education, and its limitations

Furthermore, systematic impact evaluations can provide a deeper understanding of the effects of quality assurance activities and contribute to sound development of procedures or contribute to the strategy development of QAA's (Damian, Grifoll, and Rigbers, 2015). Sustained efforts in conducting impact evaluations is needed to create credibility of external evaluation processes, and an honest attempt made to produce useful information can help institutions improve its activities.

2.9 Review of Related Literature- has EQA had an Impact on HEI's?

Academic standards which are the cornerstone of university education represent a technological perspective of quality assurance (Bloxham, 2012). Threshold standards dictate statements of knowledge, skills and values that students must achieve and demonstrate in order to gain recognition. The impact factor from a technical perspective may be viewed as the extent to which academic programs and institutional policies meet threshold standards of quality assurance. A few studies are identified which fit this theme of categorization. For example, Cardoso, Tavares and Sin (2015) analyzed institutional level implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) in Portuguese higher education institutions specifically on the quality of teaching staff. They reported that compliance was only partial. Although universities had developed sound mechanisms for selection, recruitment and appraisal of academics, measure to improve the quality of teaching staff, such as skills development, pedagogic training, material infrastructure and motivation strategies were almost absent.

Coria, Deluca and Martinez (2009) investigated the impact of quality assurance policies on the curricula of undergraduate programs in Argentina. The problems in implementing changes were

identified as structural inertia (delay in decision-making process), lack of consensus with students (reluctance if length of program is increased, or courses are eliminated), reluctance to change by academics (threats to expertise and teaching habits), and resistance to resource allocation between departments. The study revealed that in spite of these problems, external evaluation was able to force developmental changes to the curriculum. In an investigation of whether accreditation was a necessary prerequisite for maintaining high standards in Engineering programs in Malaysia, Said et.al (2011) concluded that accreditation has resulted in an increased level of QA activity, increased the number of academic staff (owing to low student-staff ratio), and teaching approaches have become more structured.

At the same time academics find certain aspects of implementing accreditation criteria to be cumbersome. The negative aspects were perceived to be associated with the reluctance of academic staff in adopting new teaching methods, the pressure to be actively involved in research which relegates teaching tasks as low priority, and accreditation criteria being too prescriptive. Obadara and Alaka (2013) investigated the impact of accreditation on Nigerian universities. The findings revealed no significant relationship between accreditation and the quality of academic programs. However, the study established positive relationships between accreditation and resource input (quantity and quality of academic staff), quality of output (attainment and achievement of student learning outcomes), and quality of process (student-teacher interaction, level of learner participation and engagement).

Hou (Angela) et al., (2013) studied the impact of three program accreditations (Higher Education Evaluation & Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT), Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB International) and Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan (IEET) on higher education institutions in Taiwan. The study indicated that all three accreditation systems had a positive impact on outcomes-based learning and teaching, self-enhancement mechanisms, and internationalization. Negative impacts related to the increased administrative workload in meeting local accreditation requirements. Respondents also indicated that the greatest challenge was insufficient human resources to handle the extra workload. In particular, the AACSB International survey respondents agreed highly on its importance for curriculum reform, which facilitated the

integration of program courses and the incorporation of institutional mission and objectives into curriculum design.

Drawing on the Portuguese experience with program accreditation, Sarrico and Alves (2015) analyzed staff quality in Public Administration education. The findings revealed that the quality of academic staff complies with the standards, but issues regarding qualifications and the intensity of research activity remain to be addressed. The study called for stringent policies to curtail possible gaming to satisfy accreditation procedures. Nguyen and Ta (2017) argued that accreditation influenced institutional quality management of Vietnamese Universities significantly, particularly in relation to programs, teaching activities, quality of faculty, research and facilities. In studying the impact of accreditation on Portuguese higher education, Sin, Tavaers and Amaral (2016) reported that program accreditation had a powerful impact in reducing the number of programs, increasing faculty with terminal qualifications and raising institutional awareness of quality.

A second theme in the research literature on the impact of external quality assurance deals with faculty acceptance of the value of external evaluation and its impact on their work. Research shows that academics most often relate quality to teaching and learning and also their perspective varies across different disciplines. For example, Watty (2006) supports the view that the differences in perceptions of academic staff leads to differences in the definition of quality and consequently differences in the systems designed to assure quality. In her study on the views of academic accountants in an Australian university, it was found that academics remain committed to the traditional view of the purpose of higher education and as a result quality in accounting education had declined. Through a questionnaire survey, Yaoming et.al (2009) investigated the perceptions of academic staff and teaching administrators at two Chinese universities. Results indicated that external evaluation is an effective system for assuring quality of higher education; however, teaching administrators were more positive about the process than academic staff. Seema, Uddam, and Mattisen (2017) studied the attitudes of academic staff towards their own work as towards external evaluations. The study showed that competent and intrinsically motivated people perceive external evaluation more positively.

Quality Culture is another critical component in understanding the process of implementing planned change in universities as a result of external evaluation. A number of studies reflected on the importance of organizational culture and its effect on change processes and strategies. For example, Newton (2000) reported that academics do not mutely accept changes or blindly abide by the demands of external quality assurance. He asserts that academics are active participants in the policy process and therefore, it is necessary to focus on what academics think and do, and how they change and “work around” policy. Smart (2003) studied the effectiveness of organizational performance of community colleges in U.S.A. The research posited that the most effective campus culture is one that reflects a healthy balance of the four culture types (adhocracy, clan, hierarchy, and market) rather than a focus on only one or two of those culture types. The study stressed the importance of institutional leaders in the management and change of campus cultures.

Acknowledging that gaining the support of institutional constituents is vital for institutional effectiveness, Welsh and Metcalf (2003) in their study on 168 institutions reported the differences in perceptions of faculty and administrative staff towards institutional effectiveness activities, and the factors that help understand their support of these activities. Results of the survey indicated that academic administrators attributed greater importance to institutional effectiveness activities rather than faculty. However, both groups had generally positive perceptions of institutional effectiveness activities. Ntim’s (2014) study focused on institutional processes and structures that support the development of an internal quality culture in private higher education institutions in Ghana. In this study, culture was conceptualized as the existence of structural/managerial component on one hand and a cultural/psychological component on the other. Considering quality as an input-process-output activity, the study reports that universities in Ghana are responding to external quality assurance, particularly in the development of an internal quality culture. Lejeune and Vas (2009) surveyed senior academic administrators in European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) accredited schools. The study showed positive effects of accreditation on some aspects of institutional effectiveness, especially the dimensions of program development, quality of faculty, social openness, and ability to acquire resources. The cultural dimensions of adhocracy and market were strongly correlated to effectiveness.

In contrast to the above observations, Anderson (2006) claims that negative impression of quality assurance mechanisms with Australian academics continue to dominate in spite of years of struggling and experimenting with issues of quality. Additional workload was a prominent theme that emerged in his research interviews. While academics seemed committed to quality teaching and quality research, they disapproved of the mechanisms of quality assessment employed in their universities. Using a mixed case-study approach of a single institution, Skolits and Greybeal (2007) studied the influence of campus institutional effectiveness activities on faculty and staff. Although favored by senior administrators and leaders, faculty and staff identified major challenges in the effectiveness of the process. Lack of time to comply with QA requirements was considered the major impediment. Another major drawback was the lack of data-driven decision making in the college.

Kleijnen et al., (2009) studied faculty perceptions on organizational culture in 18 departments of Universities of Applied Sciences in Netherlands. Results indicated that faculty were positive about the effects in terms of improvement and negative about the effects in terms of control. The results implied that organizational culture in many departments is not yet fully in line with the faculty members' preferences. A study by Naidoo (2013) targeting academic staff of a large public higher education institution in South Africa on how organizational culture affects change processes led to three vital conclusions: (1) organizational culture is fluid and characterized by conflict amongst institutional members, and is always in a state of flux i.e., it may be refuted by internal members in ways that minimize the impact of quality assurance (2) Organizational cultures cannot be easily manipulated by managers towards a pre-determined endpoint, and (3) the complex relationship between external quality assurance and organizational culture suggests that neither, alone nor jointly can address specific challenges in higher education.

The researcher identified a few studies that fit the criteria for inclusion in this study (Table 3). A positive impact denotes the extent of presumed improvement or enhancement of educational provision resulting from external evaluations. A negative impact on the other hand, indicates inherent weaknesses in the system.

TABLE 3: EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON THE IMPACT OF EQA

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
Newton (2000)	UK	academics' perceptions of quality monitoring	single-site case study of a university sector college (interview data)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> frontline academics do not mutely accept change or the particular demands of quality assurance policy or systems- they resist change in subtle ways there is no 'blueprint' or ideal model for a quality system 	Political
Smart (2003)	U.S.A	the extent to which faculty and administrators' perceptions of the organizational effectiveness was related to their perceptions of the cognitive and behavioural complexity of the organizational cultures and the leadership roles	Case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most effective campus culture is one that reflects a healthy balance of the four culture types (adhocracy, clan, hierarchy, and market). Institutional leaders had a major role in the management and change of campus cultures 		Cultural
Welsh and Metcalf (2003)	USA	Determine the impact and level of involvement of IE activities among faculty and administrators.	Mailed survey to 168 institutions (full-time faculty and academic administrators). Total respondent pool was 1232	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> significant differences in the perceptions of faculty and administrators on the importance of IE activities Academic administrators viewed IE activities as more internally motivated, more deeply implemented, with 		Cultural

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
				greater levels of personal involvement.		
Watty (2006)	Australia	Quality in accounting education were investigated from two perspectives: beliefs (what is currently occurring) and attitudes (what ought to be occurring).	Survey (postal) of Accounting academics from 39 Australian universities	.	The findings suggest differences in beliefs and attitudes, and an overall view that quality in accounting education has declined over recent years	Political
Anderson (2006)	Australia	Study responses to, and critiques of QA processes in their universities	study of 30 academics from 10 Australian universities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academics were committed to quality in research and teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academics resisted quality assurance processes within their universities due to increased workload Academics treat quality as games to be played and systems to be fed. 	Political
Skolits and Graybeal (2007)	USA	Addresses a campus IE process and its effect on faculty and staff.	Mixed case study of single institution. 138 participants- faculty (61) and administrative staff (77). IE survey and 7 interviews with senior administrators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The IE process creates significant challenges for faculty and staff. Lack of time was the major IE impediment. Need more institutional support to analyse and use existing data. 	Cultural

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
Cartwright (2007)	UK	The research examined how academic staff engaged with the discourse of EQA and the extent to which the rhetoric of quality is reflected in the day-to-day realities of post-1992 universities.	qualitative investigation of the personal experiences of six academics employed in two post-1992 universities and in-depth interviews around three themes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is a considerable mismatch between the rhetoric of the official paragons of quality represented by the QAA and the experience of quality by academic staff embroiled in the quality systems 	Political
Csizmadia, Enders & Westerheijden (2007)	Hungary	Investigates the influence of organisational characteristics on the implementation of quality management in Hungarian higher education institutions	Both qualitative and quantitative Methods were used. case study approach for a selected sample of institutions. Survey of 68 accredited higher education institutions in Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organisational variables like leaders' commitment to the implementation process, the involvement of external consultants, institutional reputation, and bureaucratic and political decision-making processes have strong effects on the implementation of quality management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Characteristics particular to higher education institutions were much less influential. no increase in the value of institutional quality, but resulted in widespread symbolic compliance of higher education institutions 	Political/ Cultural

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
Yaoming et.al (2009)	China	An investigative study to examine how academic staff and teaching administrators see teaching evaluation. It also aims to find if they are direct participants and key insiders in the process of teaching and their personal impressions are valuable for improving the work of teaching evaluation	Questionnaire survey targeted academic staff and administrators from two universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong positive relationship between undergraduate teaching and quality evaluation. • Teaching administrators are more positive about evaluation than academic staff • The effects of evaluation are greater on teaching and teaching-administration than their effect on students. 		Political
Kleijnen et al., (2009)	Netherlands	Staff resistance reflected in differences in organizational culture	Involved 18 departments within Dutch Universities of Applied Science.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • faculty were generally positive about the effects in terms of improvement, but negative in terms of control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In many departments, organizational culture was not in line with staff members' preferences. 	Political and cultural
Lejuene and Vas (2009)	Belgium, Europe	measure the perceived impact of an accreditation process on organizational effectiveness and culture	survey with 31 deans and directors of EQUIS accredited schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive impact on some dimensions of effectiveness, and no impact related to the bureaucracy dimension of culture • Highest perceived positive impacts are program development, quality of the faculty, social openness and the ability to 		Cultural

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
				<p>acquire resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhocracy and market are strongly correlated to effectiveness. 		
Coria Deluca and Martinez (2010)	Argentina	To assesses the impact on the curricula of undergraduate programmes in Argentina	68 UG programmes considered for descriptive analysis; two sources of information: peers' opinions about accredited programmes and a total of 20 interviews with academics who were involved in the accreditation processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the accreditation process was mandatory and institutions responded to peer review, it had a significant impact on programmes because it enabled universities to implement curricula changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities faced problems when they attempted to implement changes to adjust curricula to quality criteria due to individual and organisational resistance to change. • Resistance is in the form of structural inertia, resistance to resource allocation between teaching departments, lack of consensus and threats to expertise and teaching habits. 	Technical and political
Stensaker et.al, 2011	Norway	Study the impact of NOKUT's external quality assurance process	Survey data from 526 members (representing institutional leadership, staff, students, and academic staff)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents perceive NOKUT's external evaluation process as a control mechanism stimulating bureaucracy, organization, and regulation than addressing core issues of academics, staff and students. • The study also suggested that students are less convinced and least informed about the effects of 	Political

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
					quality assurance than any others in the stakeholder group	
Cheng (2011)	England	How frontline academics in England perceived and valued the audit culture and its practice	interviews with 64 academics conducted in two phases along with substantial document analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal quality assurance worked effectively within the institution and that impacted good teaching practices. • The internal quality process was considered more legitimate by academics than the external process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent use of terms such as “bureaucracy” and “professionalism” in referring to the audit process. • Quality audit was regarded as a symbolic regulation over the work of academic staff. 	Political
Said et al., (2011)	Malaysia	Evaluate the impact of the accreditation scheme on the quality of engineering programs	Benchmarking against accreditation criteria of other countries, and survey through questionnaires (perspectives of academics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercising accreditation does have its merits, especially at the institutional level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academics find certain aspects of implementing the accreditation criteria cumbersome, which was described as being prescriptive • Accreditation required enormous time commitments on the part of the volunteer evaluators. 	Technical and political
Lemaitre et.al, 2011	seven Ibero-American countries (Mexico, Costa Rica, Argentina, Columbia, Chile,	Impact of EQA at system and institutional level	interviews, focus groups, and survey questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the institutional level, the impact was visible on the quality of decision making processes • consideration of results of internal assessment in institutional planning • increased importance provided to teaching as a core function of universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation was linked to increased bureaucratization and heavy administrative workload. 	Political

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
	Spain and Portugal)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> academic staff and students reported positive changes in teaching and learning 		
Goodliffe and Razvi, 2012	Oman	An investigation of lessons learnt from its audit process	evaluation of 25 published audit reports- Thematic analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results showed areas of strength and opportunities for improvement quality is not related to whether institutions are private or publicly funded. Stakeholders reported that the impact of preparing for the audit and the audit process itself has been valuable to the Omani higher education sector 		Technical and Political
Suchanek et.al., 2012	Germany	empirical evaluation to provide HEIs with information and advice needed to strengthen internal quality assurance process and lay the foundation for refining external quality assurance practices.	document analysis of 1380 accreditation decisions made between 2004-2009 in 25 HEIs and 11 vocational academies, and a series of interviews of key stakeholders (institutional representatives and students)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings from the document analysis indicated that the impact of a few quality criteria could not be fully assessed from program accreditation (e.g., quality assurance, and system control) although program accreditation enabled meeting threshold standards, it did not aid improvement Academics reported on the lack of sufficient resources needed to underpin the reform, and cost-benefit ratio was considered to be minimal 	Technical/ Political

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
Olabanji and Abayomi, (2013)	Nigeria	examines the impact of accreditation on quality assurance in Nigerian universities	74 universities were surveyed using two sets of questionnaires- Accreditation Procedures and Minimum Academic Standard Questionnaire (APMASQ), and Quality Assurance Questionnaire (QAQ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significant relationship between accreditation and resource input • significant relationship between accreditation and quality of output • significant relationship between accreditation and quality of process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant relationship between accreditation and quality of curriculum. 	Technical
Naidoo, (2013)	South Africa	an investigation to confirm that organisational cultures can easily be manipulated (usually from the top by management); and second, that the introduction of external quality assurance is an unproblematic technology that will be accepted without question by HEIs	Case study of 1 public HEI; participants belonged to academic occupational categories		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational culture is constantly in a state of flux -institutional members have to engage with both internal and external quality initiatives which results in either establishing a sound system or in resistance to QA initiatives to their preferred way of doing things. • Some cultures within the institution continue to exercise their resistance in subtle and covert ways 	Cultural

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
Ntim, (2014)	Ghana	To identify institutional processes and structures that support the development of an internal quality culture in the emerging private universities in Ghana	survey - 120 respondents representing 30 universities; respondents included Senior Academics, Administrative Managers, and Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ghanaian private universities have embedded a quality assurance culture majority of respondents acknowledge a rigorous and comprehensive coverage of evaluation on course monitoring at different levels 		Cultural
Cardoso, Tavares and Sin, (2015)	Portugal	To analyse if higher education institutions in Portugal are taking measures to improve and assure the quality of their teaching staff in accordance to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG).	The analysis focused on a sample of four Portuguese institutions. Data was collected through document analysis and semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings suggest that compliance is only partial. Adequate mechanisms for staff selection, recruitment and performance appraisal existed in all four institutions and teaching staff were found to be qualified and competent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures to continuously improve teaching staff quality such as institutional support for skills development, pedagogic training opportunities, material infrastructure and motivation strategies were almost non-existent. 	Technical and Political
Hou (Angela) et al., (2015)	Taiwan	impact of QA system of Asian higher education through a case study of the effects of three program accreditations on higher education	both quantitative and qualitative research methods; the views of administrators and staff in the accredited programs of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three accreditation systems had a positive impact on learning, outcomes-based teaching, self-enhancement mechanisms and internationalization in Taiwan's higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased time and efforts by staff and faculty has inevitably resulted in resistance to all three program accreditations. 	Technical and political

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
		institutions in Taiwan	HEEACT, AACSB, and IEET were gathered by surveys; case study of the effects of three program accreditations	institutions		
Sarrico and Alves (2015)	Portugal	an analysis of staff quality (staff qualifications, research intensity, disciplinary orientation, diversity, international orientation, professional orientation, and inbreeding) in public administration education	Case study approach involving 236 academics in six public universities. A statistical analysis is made of the indicators for all 21 study programmes in the area of public administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of academic staff complies with standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are issues regarding qualifications and research intensity that need to be addressed • research capacity needs further development, possibly by increasing internationalisation of doctoral education, and research activity in general 	Technical/ Political
Salam and Shersad (2015)	UAE	How accreditation standards have led to quality improvement in two UAE Universities	Review of secondary data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • culture of self-assessment • improved motivation and commitment of faculty • effective leadership • common language • Streamlining data • Systematic and regular assesment 		Technical

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
Seema, Udam and Mattisen, 2016	Estonia	A study to ascertain the attitudes of academic staff towards external evaluations and towards their own work	The study gathered the views of 252 academic staff members through an internet-based survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> external evaluation raise awareness of weakness in the systems as well as provide solutions for eliminating them academic staff members may be intrinsically motivated and enjoy their work irrespective of being controlled or forced to abide by internal or external evaluations 		Political
Leiber, 2016	Six European countries- Belgium, Finland, Germany, Norway, Romania, Spain	determine the causal connection of QA procedures implemented by each of the four QA agencies (FINEEC, EVALAG, ARACIS, AQU Catalunya and noticeable changes in institutional level and attitude of stakeholders.	based on surveys and document analyses carried out in the framework of a before-after comparison approach (surveys of students, teaching staff, institutional leadership and quality managers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> it raised awareness with stakeholders that different instruments are used to monitor and enhance programs of study. faculty reacted positively to external quality assurance when they were involved with the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no impact on teaching methodologies. Although the study was carried out in the framework of a before-after comparison approach, the base, mid and end-line data was based on perspectives of stakeholder groups. 	Political
Nguyen and Ta (2017)	Vietnam	Investigates the perspectives of managers, staff, lecturers and students on the impacts of accreditation in	case study involving semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders of a university ; thematic analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation positively influences most of the university's management processes, including programs, teaching activities, lecturers, support staff, students and student facilities. 		Technical / Political

Author & year	Country of study	Aim of the study	Methodology	Nature of Impact (Positive)	Nature of Impact (Negative)	Focus
		institutional quality management.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The authors argue that the influence of accreditation contributes significantly to enhancing the university's quality of teaching, learning, research and management. 		

2.10 Literature Synthesis

External Quality Assurance is considered the prime driver of change in higher education systems world-wide. A wide review of the literature on quality assurance suggests that several attempts have been made to study the impact of EQA on the internal working of higher education institutions. Studies that projected an optimistic outlook of the potential of external evaluation indicated increased awareness of quality assurance and its mechanisms among institutional constituencies; others highlighted an improvement in the quality of institutional decision making and strategic planning. Some studies were driven to diminish the impact of EQA on curriculum, teaching and learning, quality of teaching staff, and internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms by showing inconsistent or “no impact” of accreditation. Negativity was mostly expressed in terms of bureaucratization, heavy administrative workload, stress, feeling of being controlled, lack of resources to aid improvement, and minimal cost-benefit to institutions which render external evaluation as a control mechanism rather than an instrument aiding improvement and innovation. Academic staff resistance and increased bureaucracy towards the accreditation process was a common finding in many such studies (Schomaker, 2013; Suchanek et al., 2012). This gives an indication that accreditation continues to remain a controversial topic in academia and is under constant criticism for its failure to foster improvement, although there are no strong empirical evidences to support such claims.

At the heart of the literature on change management is also the issue of culture which relates to beliefs and attitudes common to a group of people affected by the intervention. It is therefore, a common practice among researchers to measure the impact of an educational intervention based on how well the culture of an institution has changed. As Fullan (2003) states, the measure of success of an external evaluation process is whether the beliefs and values of academics have changed as a consequence. Researchers’ have also observed that all components of a higher education system do not embrace change at the same rate and express reluctance in accepting new reporting structures (Chapman and Austin, 2002). For example, in assessing the impact of external evaluation on curriculum, Coria Deluza and Martinez (2010) and Said et al (2011) discuss problems faced by academics in adjusting to the quality criteria of external evaluation. As the acceptance of the process sank-in, academics cooperated with the new system and this enabled significant changes to the curriculum.

Guskey (2003) also supports the view that a commitment to change happens only after academics have seen it working successfully in practice. Stensaker and Harvey (2011) sought the perspectives of the management, staff, and students on the impact of external evaluations. While members of the management had the highest positive impressions of external evaluations, faculty reported a mixed response and students the fewest positive responses. A later study by El Khawas (2014) points to the growing importance given to student transformation during the teaching and learning process. The importance of knowledge acquisition and students' learning experience is portrayed as that which impacts academic and pedagogic quality values. (Las and Vegas, 2009) reported on the positive impact of accreditation in terms of the implications on organizational development, and an internal quality culture. The most notable impact was on the development of programs, ability to acquire resources, quality of faculty, and better internal communication.

In summary, the studies show that the approaches used, and analysis of the impact of external evaluation, can be categorized as heterogeneous in conceptually how they associate external evaluation with quality in higher education. The dimensions of analysis differ based on the perceived problem itself and on how their internal quality assurance systems are structured. Interestingly, there is not much variation in the methods, approaches and techniques used in the analyses. These revelations point to two major conclusions - Analysis of quality is related to its purpose or perceived problems, and quality is not merely about compliance and satisfaction but has a political dimension which is equally important.

2.10.1 Gaps in existing Literature

The observations gleaned from empirical studies listed in Table 3 suggest that EQA has resulted in clear documentation and transparency of operations, but its link with internal processes of universities, and improvements in core activities such as teaching and learning remains patchy. Existing empirical research on quality assurance in the UAE also provides a vague picture of the impact because these are mostly individual institutional experiences. Overall, there is a paucity of empirical research and literature on external quality assurance in the UAE. This research seeks to respond to this gap and make a contribution to the international literature on impact evaluation by providing a UAE perspective to the impact factor.

2.10.2 Methodological Gaps from Empirical Research

A review of existing impact research raised some methodological challenges of measuring outcomes of external evaluation. Most impact analyses were case-driven and surveys and interviews were popular methodologies of data collection. Academics were key participants in most studies and hence the impact factor, to a large extent, leaned towards the notions of teaching/academic staff. A review of current evidence reveals lack of strong research designs in measuring quality. Review of external accreditation reports in impact studies has mostly followed a qualitative approach especially using thematic analyses. For example, an attempt to study documented accreditation reports was evident in the study by Goodliffe and Razvi, (2012). The thematic analysis presented of the 25 audit reports were based on a mapping of the commendations, affirmations and recommendations made by the audit team during a particular intervention period. It is known that a trend study typically samples different groups at different points in time from the same population. The results, as claimed, do not present key trends in the higher education sector of the country. It rather presents the results from a sample of audits performed by the agency showing areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Analysis using an ex-post design is the most common method used in impact analyses so far (Leiber, Stensaker and Harvey, 2015). However, the analysis is performed after the intervention using secondary data and stakeholder perceptions. On the other hand, although a before-after design can measure the impact at two or more intervention points, it may not provide accurate information of whether the impact was caused due to the intervention or other factors that affect higher education institutions. Since accreditation is a process of continual improvement, its impact has to be measured over time which cross-sectional surveys and interviews are incapable of doing. Thus, this dissertation provides a unique methodology by bridging this gap by using an ex-post before-after analysis of secondary data (ERT Reports) and at the same time validating the results using a stakeholder judgment approach. While the use of secondary data proved economical, it may be questioned for potential bias as it is self-reported by the review teams appointed by the QAA. Therefore, the researcher has opted to support the use of secondary data with primary data collected through surveys and interviews of academic staff. This was not a tightly controlled assignment and therefore has its inherent limitations. However, the triangulation of results from each phase of the study is expected to strengthen the overall results.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Outline of the Chapter

The previous chapters have reviewed the extant literature on external evaluation, its scope, the process, and its impact on higher education institutions. Based on this review, the research objectives were identified and research questions formulated. This chapter explains the methodology adopted in conducting this research. The chapter begins by revisiting the aims and research questions of the study. This helps in bringing a focus to the study by identifying the unit of analysis, justifying the epistemological position taken by the researcher, and identifying the appropriate methods for data gathering and analysis. A description of the instruments used, and sampling procedure is also discussed. The chapter concludes with reflections on limitations of the methodology and further discussion of the validity, reliability and ethical considerations adopted in the study.

3.2 Research Approach

The theoretical and epistemological assumption of this research adopts a pragmatic stance. The choice of a methodological approach and research design originates from the underlying research question: **Have the UAE Standards for Licensure and Accreditation had an impact on the quality of higher education provision in Ministry Licensed Non-Federal Higher Education Institutions?**

Several sub-questions were derived from this larger framework to bring a specific focus to the study:

1. Do External Review Team Reports of the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) indicate that external program accreditation has resulted in tangible improvements to academic programs offered by UAE institutions? Which areas have shown the greatest positive impact and which have shown the least positive impact?
2. Has accreditation had an impact at the academic unit level from the perspectives of faculty involved in the accreditation process? Do faculty opinions on the impact of

accreditation vary based on the level of their involvement in the accreditation process?

How do they perceive the positive and negative aspects of the impact of accreditation?

3. Has accreditation resulted in consequential changes to an institution's internal quality culture?

In deciding the appropriate methodology for conducting the study, it was necessary to first identify the unit of analysis. Vygotsky et al (1987) states “the unit designates a product of analysis that possesses all the basic characteristics of the whole. The unit is a vital and irreducible part of the whole”. In this study external evaluation serves as the specific case of interest and the basic units of analysis are academic departments within higher education institutions. The study approached the research questions from two different perspectives: at the policy level through inferences gained from External Review Team Reports of the Quality Assurance Agency and at the academic unit level through the perspectives of front-line faculty and QA staff. The evaluative nature of the research questions which aims to gain useful data through multiple channels require the adoption of a mixed methodology to illuminate the phenomenon of external evaluation, and specifically its impact on the quality of academic programs. Leiber, Stensaker and Harvey (2015) emphasize the importance of methodological pluralism in conducting impact evaluations. They suggest that valid and reliable results can be achieved only when an adequate combination of quantitative and qualitative methods are used in such evaluations. According to these researchers, a valid impact analysis should:

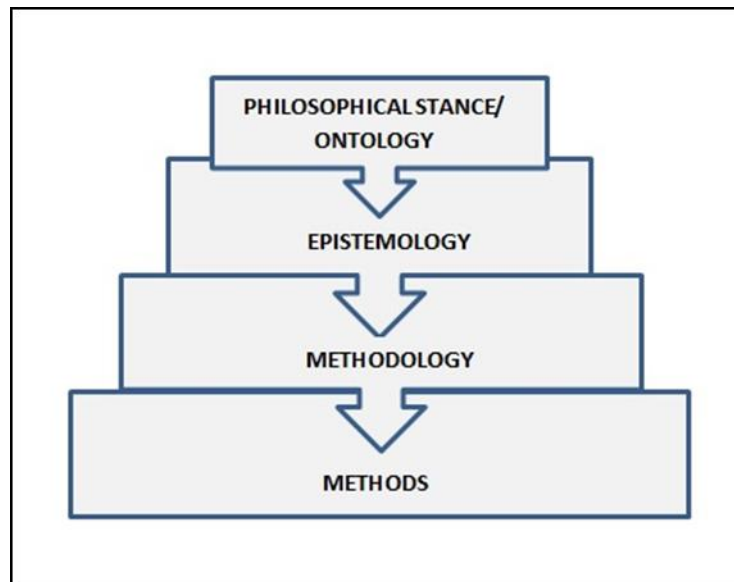
- perform a thorough analysis of secondary data e.g., performance indicators, institutional documents, reports etc., and longitudinal survey studies
- empirically test hypotheses about causal social mechanisms
- study assessment of intervention effects by participants and experts. (usually done by observations and in-depth interviews)
- perform counterfactual self-estimation by program participants

In supporting the use of mixed methods in conducting impact evaluations, Bamberger, Rao and Woolcock, (2010) state that impact evaluations requires an eclectic approach to data that involves observation, participation, text-based information as well as open interviews with stakeholders. All of these characteristics and goals of a mixed methods design resonated well with the researcher's goal and planned methodologies.

3.3 Research Paradigms

Four major aspects have to be considered in order to guide a research (figure 9): Philosophical Stance or Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology, and Methods (Crotty, 1998).

FIGURE 9: KEY CONSIDERATIONS GUIDING A RESEARCH



Ontology reflects the nature of reality. A researcher adopts a particular stance towards the nature of knowledge which could be based on objectivism (positivist, scientific, structural) or subjectivism (interpretivist, humanist, post-structural). Objectivism holds the view that the world is full of facts regardless of our notions about them. Subjectivism, on the other hand holds that our existence does not have an identity until we perceive it. It is therefore essential for a researcher to understand their philosophical stance as this will guide the way research is conducted and interpreted. The philosophical stance that underpins this research adopts a position that is described as pragmatism. The wide-spread view amongst mixed methods research is that the philosophical stance for qualitative research is constructivism and quantitative research is post-positivism. Both perspectives disagree on major issues concerning the nature of objects of the research resulting in paradigm wars between qualitative and quantitative approaches (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010). Mixed method proponents have argued that these philosophical disagreements are not fundamental and research methods are not intrinsically linked to or dependent on philosophical positions. Pragmatism is sometimes

described as taking a middle position between positivist and interpretivist ontologies and adopts a pluralist position. It is a practical starting point for mixed methods research. This approach is favored because results can be viewed in terms of probable causal effects and the researcher has the discretion to draw a conclusion based on evidences. It reduces subjectivity and provides objective evidence of actual program impact.

As a research paradigm, pragmatism is categorized as (1) Functional pragmatism (2) Referential pragmatism, and (3) Methodological pragmatism. Methodological Pragmatism as a research paradigm informed this study as it provides a philosophical underpinning to examine the impact of external quality assurance on curricular aspects using a mixed methods research design. According to classical pragmatists Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, a knower of “truth” should obtain empirical support for beliefs through experimentation and learn from experiences (Peirce and Houser, 1998). Dewey (1999), another classical pragmatist conceived that the theory of inquiry begins with a problem, of which we do not have a clear picture, and the problem comes to an end when we find a solution. Inquiry is therefore considered a struggle that replaces “doubt” with “settled belief” by reflecting upon the methods of science. Pragmatism is essentially an interaction between knowledge and action making it an appropriate basis for research approaches intervening into the world and not merely observing the world (Goldkuhl, 2012). Methodological Pragmatism permits adopting a pragmatist stance combined with interpretive thinking and methods.

Returning to the research questions of this study, a pragmatic standpoint is favored for two reasons. First, the main objective of this study is to unpack the observations made by external experts on the effectiveness of enforcing accreditation standards on UAE institutions through observable, scientific and measurable results. A pragmatist perspective supports the evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions in real-life conditions through the presentation of practical evidence. Accreditation is considered as an intervention in the normal working of universities. The main source of data in this study is the information gathered by the CAA’s External Review Teams after each EQA procedure. This information is in the form of descriptive reports structured according to the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation of the CAA. The Report discusses in detail the institutional and programmatic compliance with respect to the various criteria in the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation, and the review team’s

recommendations for improvement. It is expected that the focus and source of information generated out of an EQA procedure support the enhancement of the institution and its academic programs. Past experiences or documented reports may therefore be used to study the impact of accreditation in particular scenarios.

Second, evaluating the impact of external quality assurance depends on what works in a given context without having to take a particular theoretical stance. Knowledge claims and evidence cannot be founded on observations and measurements alone; they need to be validated on the basis of practicality and theory (Bamberger, Rao and Woolcock, 2010). Also, no single point of view can reveal the entire picture in impact evaluations - multiple realities exist which must be explored (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). It is understood that the expected impact of EQA procedures emerges with the indispensable willingness of the institution to embrace the benefits of accreditation and to develop and improve its internal activities. While the efficiency of the process does matter, what is more important is to assess the impact in certain quality dimensions through the perspectives of institutional stakeholders. The experience has been that this information (experience of teachers, for example) is not captured adequately in impact studies conducted so far (Volkwein et al., 2007, Westerheijden et al., 2007).

In consideration of these deficiencies, the researcher has included an element of stakeholder feedback on the impact dimensions identified within the boundaries of this study. Although a phenomenological element seeps into the approach adopted by the researcher at this point, methodological pragmatism predominantly overshadows the assumptions taken by the researcher in this study. Further, arguing for pragmatism that is phenomenologically informed, Hills (2013) contests that such dilemma is unmerited as this situation, is in reality, neither classical pragmatism nor phenomenology, but scientific naturalism and subjectivism. Bourgeois and Rosenthal (1983) suggest that convergence of the two perspectives should be accounted for in terms of their significance- philosophers following one movement should be able to enter the other in a way that allows a real encounter to develop. The intent here is to clarify the researcher's standpoint in taking a pragmatic stand-point, and also explaining the basic rapport between pragmatism and phenomenology.

The research questions in this study are predominantly answered by quantitative data, while the qualitative data assumes a more confirmatory role. It is this conundrum of complementarity that attracts researchers to adopt mixed methods where both scientific rigor and theory is expected to show a more accurate picture of reality (Creswell, 2007). The researcher assumes that people who are most involved in the accreditation process are in a best position to understand the phenomena of external evaluation, assess their importance, and judge deficiencies in the system. The phenomenon of “human engagement” in the accreditation process is captured in this study through the reflections of faculty and QA staff. A mixed methods approach combines quantitative methods that permit generalization and tests of statistical significance with qualitative methods that permit in-depth description, analysis of the process, and patterns of social interaction. Such an approach provides the flexibility to fill in gaps and use triangulation to strengthen the validity of the results. These different perspectives provide a direction to understand and explore complex, multi-dimensional phenomena such as an external evaluation process.

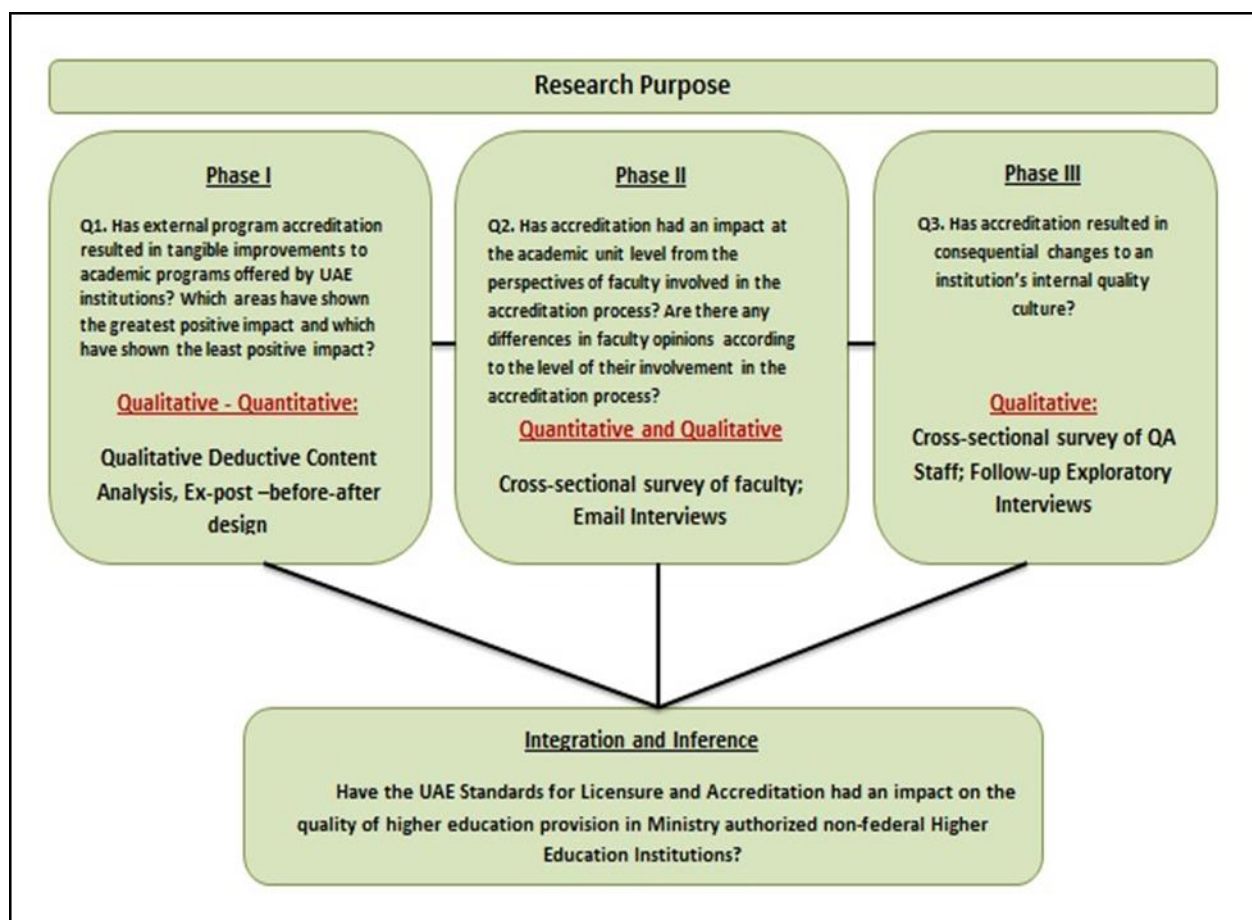
3.4 Data Collection

This section discusses the research strategy employed in this study. As the aim is to investigate the impact of external accreditation on the quality of educational programs, a multi-level mixed methods design is considered appropriate. The most commonly used mixed methods designs are the triangulation design, the embedded design, the explanatory design, and the exploratory design (Creswell, 2007). The research questions for this study are best answered using a triangulation design with each of the research phases using a combination of different design models. Triangulation involves the conscious combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies as a powerful solution to strengthen a research design where the logic is based on the fact that a single method can never adequately solve the problem of rival causal factors (Vos, 1998).

In view of the methodological designs that are possible in impact evaluations of higher education institutions (discussed in the earlier chapter), this study is conducted in three phases to answer the stated research questions. Phase I employs a combination of an ex-post and before-after analysis design based on data collected from Program Accreditation Reports. In Phase II, a cross-

sectional survey is conducted to study the perceptions of faculty on the impact of accreditation. Email interviews with faculty serves as a confirmatory medium augmenting the results of the survey. An email interview was preferred as it allowed synchronous communication and participants did not hesitate in giving honest and sometimes, socially undesirable judgments about certain issues. Moreover, the intention of the researcher was to obtain a reflective view of the results, not spontaneity of responses (Joelle, 2019). In Phase III, a cross-sectional survey and follow-up semi-structured exploratory interviews were conducted with Quality Assurance/ Institutional Effectiveness Directors of HEIs. Finally, the results from the three phases were triangulated to answer the main research question. The intersection of results from the three Phases is expected to provide a wholesome picture of the impact, and is not intended to determine which approach shows the right outcome. Creswell (2007) states that triangulation aims to figure out broad and profound knowledge with different perspectives on one phenomenon and discover new dimensions. A visual representation of the methodology adopted in the study is provided below.

FIGURE 10: VISUAL PRESENTATION OF METHODOLOGY



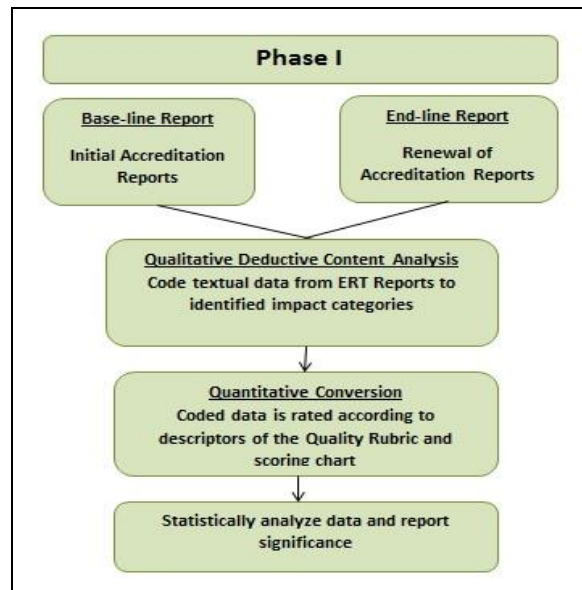
Each of the three research phases are discussed below detailing the methods of analysis, and the sampling frame that was employed in each phase of the study.

3.4.1 Phase I of the Study- Review of External Review Team Reports

Phase I of the research began with a qualitative deductive content analysis of External Review Team Reports on program accreditation. Document analysis and observation is one method used to analyze differences in structures, actions, institutional and program changes that occur after each intervention (accreditation review). The proposed design used a base-line report, representing the first accreditation review (akin to a pre-accreditation scenario), and an end-line report which is an outcome of a renewal of accreditation review. Contents from the ERT Reports were coded alongside four pre-determined impact categories- (1) Impact on Program Design (2) Impact on Program Management (3) Impact on Teaching Quality, and (4) Impact on Program Effectiveness. Improvements and trends are compared within individual programs over the two intervention periods. The coded narratives were rated using a Quality Rubric (Appendix I) and a

scoring chart developed by the researcher. Statistical analysis was conducted to determine if differences between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation scores were significant. The proposed design is shown in the diagram below:

FIGURE 11: PHASE I - VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF METHODOLOGY

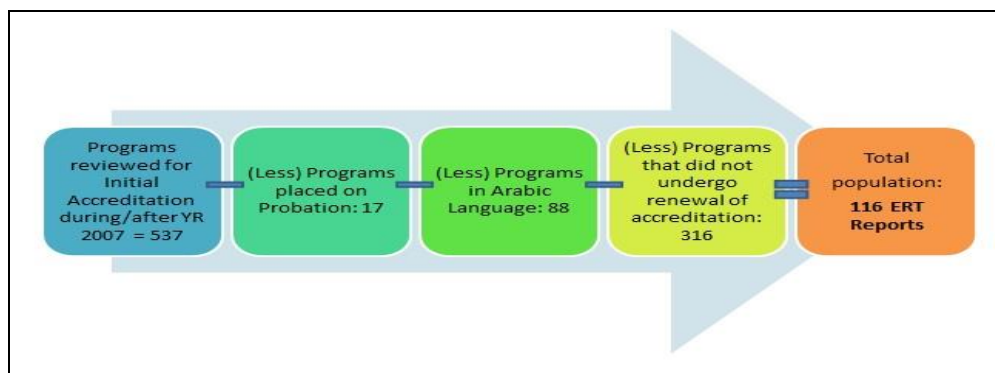


The External Review Team Reports were extracted by the researcher from the CAA’s Document database - “CORE”. An official approval was obtained from the CAA to use these Reports for the study (Appendix II). The research design required only ERT Reports of programs that had undergone two cycles of accreditation. The Researcher populated a list of 116 such Reports that had undergone two cycles of review which comprised the total population of the study. Out of this, fifty (50) ERT Reports (covering both periods of review) were considered for the analysis. Criterion-based stratified sampling was adopted in choosing the sample size for this phase of the analysis. Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some pre-determined criterion of importance (Patton, 2001). It allows the researcher to focus on certain characteristics associated with the research (Merriam, 2009).

In this study, only those programs that have undergone two cycles of CAA program accreditation review with the first review having taken place during or after year 2007 are chosen. The researcher set this as a criterion to ensure that the Reports were structured either according to the

2007 or 2011² version of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. It is noted that the largest numbers of CAA accredited programs are in business or business-related areas followed by engineering, information technology, and the health sciences. A few programs exist in the social or behavioral sciences area. The researcher stratified the 116 Reports under five broad subject areas - Business, Engineering, Information Technology, Health Sciences, and Social Sciences. Finally, ten (10) samples from each subgroup (covering two intervention periods) were drawn for the study.

FIGURE 12: PHASE I: SAMPLING OF ERT REPORTS



The Quality Rubric was used as an instrument to quantify coded narratives from ERT Reports. The Rubric covered the four identified impact areas and included a descriptor for each rating category. A scoring chart, developed by the researcher was used to rate the various segments in ERT Reports on a five-point scale (Table 4).

TABLE 4: SCORING CHART

Score	Performance Descriptor	Interpretation of Descriptor
5	Very Good	Excellent characteristics expressed through commendations and appreciations
4	Good	No major shortcomings; indicates compliance to Standards without specific requirements

¹The 2011 edition of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation is the latest version published by the CAA

3	Fair	Shortcomings indicated by Requirements and Suggestions
2	Poor	Shortcomings in important areas with Requirements asking for change
1	Very poor	Serious shortcomings calling into question the quality of the program

In developing the Quality Rubric, reference was made to performance indicators of quality in curriculum developed by Ashworth and Harvey (1994). These characteristics were modified to match the patterns of narratives in CAA's Accreditation Reports. On a general scale, a "Very Good" rating is categorized as representing many good characteristics expressed through commendations and appreciations in ERT Reports. A "Good" rating suggests that there are no major shortcomings - narrative in ERT Reports may indicate compliance, without stating specific requirements. A "Fair" rating suggests a few shortcomings indicated by Requirements and Suggestions. A "Poor" rating suggests shortcomings in important areas with Requirements asking for change and a "Very Poor" rating indicates many serious shortcomings calling into question the quality of the program. A summary of the methods used in Phase I is provided in Table 5 below:

TABLE 5: PHASE 1- DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

Population	ERT Reports (116)
Site	CAA's Document Database- CORE
Sample size	5x2 reports/segment covering 5 segments= 50 ERT Reports
Sampling Method	Criterion-based stratified sampling
Instrument	Quality Rubric & Scoring Chart

3.4.2 Phase II of the Study- Survey & Interviews of Academic Staff

Phase II of the study was designed to include a cross-sectional survey of full-time faculty members followed by email interviews. The unit of observation for this study was full-time faculty members from the fifteen (15) institutions identified in Phase I of the study representing

the five academic disciplines. According to information obtained from sources within the Ministry, the total population of fulltime faculty members in the 15 institutions during the academic year 2017-18 totaled one thousand five hundred (1500). Faculty members were surveyed at their work place using a web survey form. The survey was conducted after the researcher obtained an ethical clearance from all fifteen institutions (sample of approval provided in Appendix III). A total of two hundred and sixty-five (265) faculty members from five academic departments (Business, Engineering, IT, Health Sciences, and Education) of the 15 private higher education institutions completed the survey. In an impact study conducted on the Estonian Higher Education, 250 were considered an appropriate sample size covering two groups- faculty as well as QA staff (Seema, Udam and Mattisen, 2016). Eight (8) faculty members participated in the follow-up email interview. Participants were chosen from those who agreed to be contacted during the interview stage.

Stratified purposeful sampling was used to identify potential participants for the second Phase of the study. Patton (2001) describes this procedure as “samples within samples” and suggests that purposeful samples can be stratified by selecting particular units or cases that vary according to a key dimension. Stratified sampling was used to maintain consistency in the choice of participating institutions and departments to enable comparison and triangulation of results from Phase I and II of the study. The main criteria for recruitment of faculty members are that they are employed full-time in the institution. It is expected that full-time faculty members are more involved in accreditation activities and possess greater knowledge of the process than part-time faculty. Because only faculty in specific departments were contacted, it was difficult to gain access to individual members without an identifiable source in each institution. In order to conduct the survey, the researcher contacted each institution to nominate a representative who then coordinated distribution of the survey link among faculty in identified departments (sample of email request in Appendix IV). This process continued until sufficient data was recorded. Faculty members who provided their consent for a follow-up interview were contacted after survey results were analyzed (sample of email request in Appendix V).

A questionnaire survey titled “Faculty Perspectives on the Impact of CAA Accreditation” (Appendix VI) was used to gather data for the second Phase of the study. The instrument was developed as a web-based format. The survey had 23 Likert-type statements covering all

elements on the four impact areas identified in Phase I of the study. A five-point scale was used, in which a “5” rating denoted Strongly Agree, “4” indicated Agree, “3” indicated Uncertain, “2” indicated Disagree, and “1” implied Strongly Disagree. For the purpose of analysis, 4 and 5 were considered as a positive assessment. The questionnaire was divided into 5 sections. Part A consisted Demographic Information, Part B consisted six (6) statements on the impact of accreditation on Program Design, Part C consisted six (6) statements on the impact of accreditation on Program Management, Part D consisted five (5) statements on the impact of accreditation on Teaching Quality, Part E consisted six (6) statements on the impact of accreditation on Program Effectiveness. The questionnaire comprised of three (3) negatively worded statements: Statement 17 “Has resulted in increased teaching workloads”, Statement 20 “affects the quality of teaching only during on-site visits”, and Statement 24 “has resulted in QA practices existing on paper only”. The ratings for these statements were reverse coded during the analysis. In addition, Part E included two open-ended questions.

The survey was answered through a web-based questionnaire. The views of respondents were personal and are expected to differ from the findings of the review of ERT Reports in Phase I of the study. Follow-up email interviews were conducted with faculty members who agreed to be contacted for further information. Creswell (2007) states that electronic email interviews are useful in collecting qualitative data quickly from geographically dispersed group of people. It also promotes a conversation between the researcher and the participants to expand the understanding of the topic being studied. The main objective of conducting email interviews was to validate and gain further insights on the results of the survey. Interview questions followed a structured protocol (Appendix VII) and follow-up questions were asked in cases where information received was inadequate. Data from eight (8) email interviews validated the findings from the survey. A summary of the methods used in Phase II is summarized in Table below:

TABLE 6: PHASE II – DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

Population	Fulltime faculty in 15 Private HEIs within identified academic areas
Site	Web survey completed at work place
Sample size	265 (Survey) 8 (Email Interviews)
Sampling Method	Stratified purposeful sampling

3.4.3 Phase III of the Study- Survey and Interviews of QA Staff

Phase III of the study was designed to answer the research question “*Has accreditation resulted in consequential changes to an institution’s internal quality culture?*” The study targeted Heads of Quality Units/Departments of Ministry licensed non-federal institutions in the UAE. Fifty-seven (57) institutions formed the total population for this phase of the study. This number excluded the Police and Military Colleges, and a few institutions that were placed on probation by the CAA. Heads of Quality Units were surveyed using a web survey form and exploratory follow-up interviews were conducted while respondents were at their respective institutions. Simple Random sampling was used as each member of the population had an equal chance of being recruited for the study. However, only thirty-nine (39) Heads of QA Units responded to the survey. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with 10 respondents who agreed to be contacted for further information.

A survey questionnaire was used to gather information on structural and procedural components of internal quality assurance processes in the identified institutions. The survey questionnaire used for the study is titled “Impact of External Evaluation on Institutional Quality Culture- QA Staff Perspectives” (Appendix VIII) and was designed to include two sections: Part A included questions related to the existing institutional quality assurance framework and Part B on quality assurance process concerning teaching and learning. The researcher consulted an existing questionnaire titled “Examining Quality Culture” (EQC) that was used to capture developments in quality assurance processes within European Higher Education Institutions (EUA, 2010). Questions extracted from the EQC survey were modified to suit higher education practices in the UAE. The researcher also consulted relevant segments of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation that related to Institutional Effectiveness. The European University Association acknowledges that information from its publication may be freely used with due acknowledgement. A web-based survey was launched and email requests sent to all fifty-seven (57) institutions. Follow-up interviews (Interview protocol in Appendix IX) relied on a sample of nine (9) respondents who indicated their willingness to be contacted later for further information. The interviews contributed to a deeper understanding of the quantitative data collected through

the survey. A summary of the methods of data collection employed in Phase III is summarized in Table below:

TABLE 7: PHASE III- DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

Population	57 Private HEIs
Site	Web survey completed at worksite of respondents
Sample size	39
Sampling Method	Simple random sampling
Instrument	Survey Questionnaire / Semi-structured Interviews

3.5 Pilot Study of Research Instruments

3.5.1 Phase I – Quality Rubric (External Review Team Reports on Accreditation)

Obtaining a reliable measurement is crucial in qualitative content analysis. Pre-testing the coding scheme with text samples is a way to ensure that they are appropriately coded to identified categories (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). The study warranted the use of a structured matrix based on pre-defined impact categories upon which data is strictly coded. This categorization matrix was tested using a pilot study of five ERT Reports that have undergone two cycles of accreditation reviews. The researcher was the prime and only coder involved in the process. It was more of a controlled assignment and the researcher's skills in identifying and extracting appropriate information from ERT Reports did not require a second coder (with lesser experience) to perform the same activity. Pyett (2003) argues that most often participants in a study do not have a clear understanding of their actions and motives, while researchers tend to have more capacity and obligation to apply critical understanding of interpretations in text. The exposure gained from reading and re-reading of extracted contents, helped the researcher refine the descriptor statements included the rubric. In addition, member checking by Experts helped refine the descriptor statements before finalizing it for the study.

3.5.2 Phase II- Faculty Questionnaire

The faculty survey questionnaire and process of administration of the survey was piloted to assess if the methodology and instrument were sufficient to produce reliable and valid data. The

questionnaire design process began with the formulation of survey objectives and information requirements. In the planning phase, the researcher had individual discussions with Experts in the Commission for Academic Accreditation concerning items that will be included for each impact category. The researcher based the questions/statements on the components that comprised of the impact variables identified in the Quality Rubric used for Phase I of the study. The researcher also examined questions that were used in other surveys on a similar topic as a starting point in developing the questionnaire. The draft questionnaire went through several iterations before it was finalized in the form used for the pilot study.

The questionnaire had a majority of closed statements, providing respondents the option to rate their answers on a likert scale of 1-5; 5 for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree, 3 for Uncertain, 2 for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree. The question “Do you think this questionnaire was able to handle the main elements related to your views on the impact of accreditation process at the academic unit level” generated a few thoughtful comments from faculty which were considered by the researcher in developing the final questionnaire and during analysis. The Questionnaire used for the pilot study was paper based. The pilot questionnaire was emailed to all 15 institutions identified as possible sites for the conduct of the main study. An email request was sent to Academic Leaders of these institutions requesting them to identify one or two faculty members from identified departments to participate in the pilot study. The email clearly specified that the participants in the pilot study should be exempted from participating in the main study. The invitation also sought the consent of participants in addition to specifying two conditions for their participation:

- that the participant is a full-time faculty in the department
- that the participant had some experience with CAA’s accreditation process

Twenty (20) responses were received and were subject to reliability analysis using Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha. Reliability test was conducted on each of the four indices (impact variables) of the study. On the seven items of the Program Design index, Cronbach’s alpha was recorded as 0.4. After deleting one item “The CAA’s accreditation process has rarely impacted the design, content, and rigor of programs”, the alpha score raised to 0.7. Index 2- Program Management recorded an alpha score of 0.7 on 6 items, Index 3- Teaching Quality recorded 0.56 on 5 items, and Index 4- Program Effectiveness recorded 0.58. Overall analysis of 24 items gave a

Chronbach's alpha score of **0.77**. Raykov and Marcoulides (2011) indicate 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient. The results of the pilot study are provided in Appendix X. The survey was then entered into Survey Monkey Software. The on-line survey system generated a web-link for the survey, which was used for the final study. As data collected through the survey questionnaire were perceptual, this was followed-up with email interviews with faculty members. Piloting interview questions was not possible as the questions were based on the actual results of the survey. Faculty members were contacted by email due to their busy teaching schedules.

3.5.3 Phase III – QA Survey Questionnaire & Interviews

The Quality Assurance Survey was not intended to be used for statistical testing and hence testing for reliability was not necessary. An email request was sent to Academic Leaders of a few institutions requesting them to identify one member from the Quality Assurance Unit to participate in the pilot study. Responses were recorded from nine (9) respondents and these helped refine the questions used in the final questionnaire. Creswell (2007) state the importance of soliciting the views of participants about the questionnaire. An open-ended question in the pilot questionnaire- "Do you think this questionnaire was able to handle the main questions related to your views on the impact of CAA's accreditation process on your institution's internal quality culture?" served the purpose well. Pilot interviews following a semi-structured format did not raise any major concerns. An interview protocol was developed with a set of questions to be followed during the interview. The number of questions was limited to less than 15 as suggested by Boyce and Neal (2006). A few probes were attached to the questions to elicit more information from participants when needed. The flow of questions was considered to be logical, and uninterrupted and the time taken to record each interview was reasonable. A similar format was used for all further interviews in the main study.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). It involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what the researcher has collected, read, and analyzed towards the findings of the research. Basically, it describes how the research questions

of the study are answered. An appropriate methodological approach and an adequate research design were adopted to conduct the study. In order to answer the research questions, two distinct approaches were used. The first approach which answers the first research question uses the “production-measurement” view stated by Lindsay (1992). Here, quality is treated as synonymous with performance, and therefore the discussions on the impact of accreditation revolve around how well outcomes are achieved compared to a pre-set measurement. The second approach, which addresses the second and third research question, uses the “stakeholder judgment” view in which discussions are based on the views of key actors involved and exposes imponderable elements of the processes and its outcomes from an alternate perspective.

3.6.1 Phase I –Data Collection and Analysis (ERT Reports)

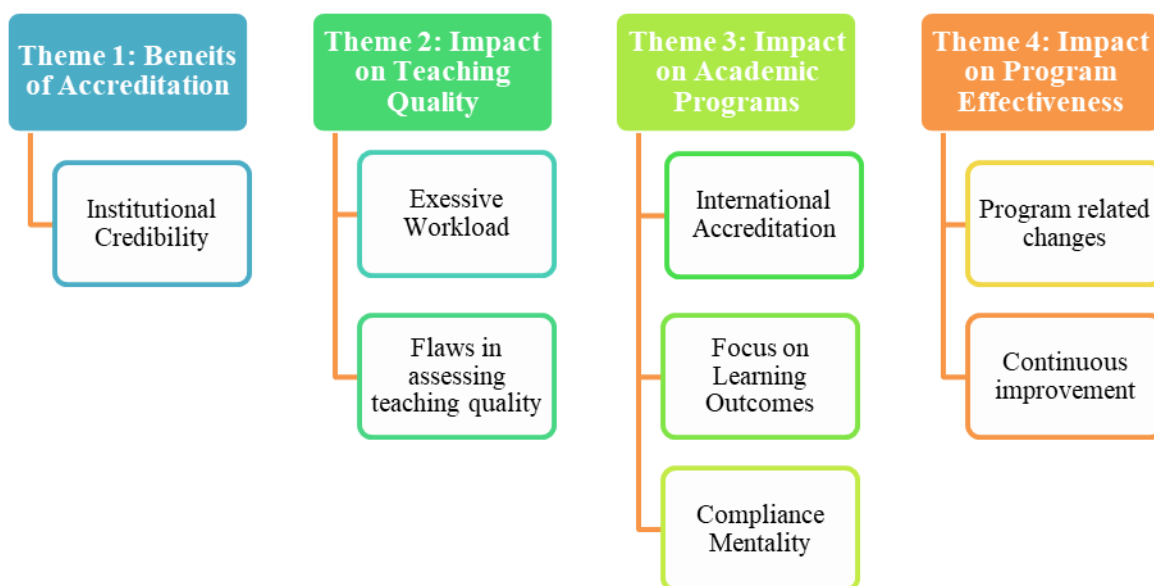
In Phase I of the study, Qualitative Deductive Content Analysis was used to analyze data from ERT Reports. Data texts were identified from ERT Reports and coded to impact categories (Impact on Program Design, Impact on Program Management, Impact on Teaching Quality, and Impact on Program Effectiveness) on excel sheets. Data was coded separately for each program covering two periods of review. Five program areas were identified and a total of fifty (50) ERT Reports were coded to excel sheets. Quantitizing or numerical translation of qualitative data, typical of a mixed methods study, is used to translate segments of coded texts extracted to excel sheets. The quality rubric and scoring charts are used as a framework for conversion of qualitative text to numerical values based on a Likert scale of 1-5. Inter-rater reliability was tested and the results indicated a strong agreement between the raters. The intention of quantitizing was to put qualitative data in a form amenable to statistical testing. The resulting data was not indicative of a normal distribution as assessed by the Shapiro-Wilk Test, and hence hypothesis testing is performed using non-parametric tests. SPSS Version 20 was used to perform the statistical analysis. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test is used to compare the ranks of two different groups of data (Sprent and Smeeton, 2007). The independent variable consisted of two matched pairs of scores - Initial Accreditation and Renewal of Accreditation. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test assigns ranks in ascending order and is expressed as the z-value (z), mean rank, and the significance level (p-value).

3.6.2 Phase II- Data Collection and Analysis (Faculty Survey & Interviews)

In phase II of the study, descriptive statistics was used to explain the demographic profile and characteristics of respondents considered for the study. Descriptive statistics also included frequency distributions, mean and median responses, standard deviations and measures of skewness that aided in assessing the underlying assumptions of the statistical methods used in the study. To answer Research Question 2, the Kruskal-Wallis H test (also called the one-way ANOVA on ranks) was conducted to determine if the perception of accreditation impact among faculty differed based on their involvement in the accreditation process. The test was applied because a Likert Scale was used to measure faculty responses, and the data was not normally distributed. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was preferred to the Mann-Whitney U test because four categorical groups identifying faculty involvement in the accreditation process (not involved, indirectly involved, partially involved, and fully involved) was being tested. Kruskal-Wallis has an alpha of .05 with one degree of freedom. The test statistics table (the chi-square statistic, the degrees of freedom, and the statistical significance of the test) presents the overall results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test. If the p value is small, it is concluded that the populations have different distributions. Alternatively, if the p value is large, then the data does not give any reason to conclude that the distributions differ. The mean rank is used to compare the effect of different levels of involvement in the accreditation process.

The reflections of faculty obtained through email interviews provided explanations on the results of the survey. Responses to interview questions were coded into segments of text and then grouped as themes and sub-themes. The main themes and sub-themes that emerged out of the data are presented in figure 13 below:

FIGURE 13: THEMES FROM FACULTY INTERVIEW DATA



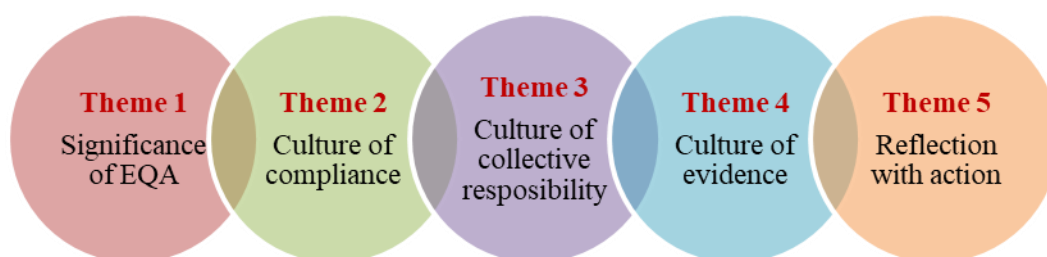
3.6.3 Phase III- Data Collection and Analysis (Survey and Interviews with QA Staff)

In Phase III of the Research, descriptive data collected through a web based survey was used to study existing quality assurance structures and practices in UAE Universities. Responses were downloaded from the Survey Monkey software in excel format and bar charts were developed to describe the data. Finally, the results of the survey were mapped against relevant segments of the CAA Standards to see how external evaluation has influenced internal operations of UAE universities and if a culture of evidence and reflection is evident as expected by the Standards. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain further insights of institutional commitment towards improvement through implementation of institutional effectiveness activities.

The researcher produced a list of the survey respondents who agreed to be interviewed. Subjects were contacted by email to arrange telephone interviews. The researcher sought the permission of each participant before the interviews were recorded. Only two participants agreed to be audio-taped. For the remaining interviews, the researcher took detailed notes, and contacted respondents later by phone when additional information was needed. All interviews were transcribed and emailed to participants seeking their consent for inclusion in the study. The transcribed data was anonymised, identifying each participant by random initials and removing any identifying information of the institution. Only in one or two cases, minor changes to

transcripts were made by participants. This strategy called “member checking” was performed to ensure validity and credibility of the interview data. Although the researcher was aware and experienced in using NVivo to analyze qualitative data, manual coding was preferred as it brought the researcher closer to the data and helped question, explore, and reflect on the findings. Master themes were developed based on reading and re-reading of the transcripts. Five themes were identified from the analysis of interview data as presented in the figure below:

FIGURE 14: THEMES FROM QA STAFF INTERVIEWS



The study was conducted in three phases to answer each of the three research questions which were derived from an overarching aim to evaluate if the CAA Standards for Licensure and Accreditation has had an impact on the quality of education provision in Ministry licensed higher education institutions in the UAE. The approach taken by the researcher has allowed a range of findings to emerge from secondary as well as primary data used in this study. Triangulation of the findings from each phase is tabulated to highlight key points and helped the researcher form an overall interpretation of the study. Not all findings were positive in terms of the impact, however, as will be argued in the conclusions of this research, external evaluation has positively impacted the working of UAE Universities in many significant ways indicating the importance of the process as a key determinant of quality.

3.7 Trustworthiness and Reliability of the Research

Trustworthiness of a research is established by demonstrating the rigour with which the study is conducted (Merriam and Tisdell, 2018). Quantitative and Qualitative paradigms employ a different rhetoric to persuade readers of their trustworthiness. For example, quantitative researchers use internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity to establish

dependability, and confirmability to establish trustworthiness. Demonstration of trustworthiness in qualitative content analysis should be described in all three phases of the analysis: (1) preparation (2) organization, and (3) reporting of results (Elo et.al, 2014).

Preparation: Selecting an appropriate method of data collection is essential to ensure the credibility of content analysis. The ERT Reports chosen for the study were carefully selected to meet the sampling criteria. It is to be noted that there are no established criteria for the size of a unit of analysis, or the number of objects to study, when using content analysis. (Bengston, 2016). The researcher invested over 3 months in data extraction and analysis. A prolonged engagement helped the researcher to immerse in and understand minor nuances of changes between two accreditation periods within and amongst the identified variables.

Organization: Member checking was used in the review of descriptors of the quality rubric. Expert opinion was sought for establishing content validity of the Quality Rubric and its adoption as a tool for analyzing and extracting data from ERT Reports. Three Experts from the CAA and one External Consultant of the Commission for Academic Accreditation were sent a draft version of the Quality Rubric along with the scoring chart and asked questions as in Appendix XI. Based on the feedback, the rubric was modified. A further meeting with two Experts helped validate final changes to the rubric and confirmed its inclusion as an instrument for the study. The researcher then used five samples of accreditation reports (excluded from the final study) to extract contents according to variables identified in the quality rubric and used the scoring chart to see how well they quantitatively translated using the ratings. Another possible threat to the internal validity of the Quality Rubric was identified as the change in the different versions of the Standards used during accreditation reviews. In order to offset this limitation, a mapping of the identified segments of the Quality Rubric to relevant sections of the two versions of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation (2007 and 2011) is provided in Appendix XII. The mapping ensured that relevant variables of the study are addressed in accreditation reports irrespective of the version used during accreditation reviews. Such detailed checks helped to keep the researcher honest and bias probed. Moreover, it helped in clarifying initial interpretations of the data. The decisions made after the quantitative scoring in the final study was checked by another researcher employed with the CAA. Inter-rater reliability was tested for all five program reports and agreement ranged from moderate to strong.

Reporting: The reporting of content analysis must pay particular attention to how connections between data and results are reported. The researcher used statistical analysis to answer the research question while augmenting the findings through rich textual explanations. Conformability of survey findings were achieved by a reflection of the results by participants of the study. This ensured that the survey results speak for itself, and is not based on possible biases and assumptions of the researcher.

It was more of a controlled assignment and the researcher's skills in identifying and extracting appropriate information from ERT Reports did not require a second coder (with lesser experience) to perform the same activity. Pyett (2003) argues that most often participants in a study do not have a clear understanding of their actions and motives, while researchers tend to have more capacity and obligation to apply critical understanding of interpretations in text. However, a second coder was invited to rate researcher extracted contents of five (5) reports (randomly selected) from each program category using the scoring chart and quality descriptors. Lombard et al., (2004) state that it is impractical to test all of the extracted content and 10% of the total content is adequate to test inter-coder reliability of data. According to the, several methodologists have suggested that coefficients of .90 or greater is highly reliable, and .80 is acceptable in most situations. McHugh (2012) states that reliability of data collection shows overall confidence in a research study's accuracy and any kappa below 0.60 indicates inadequate agreement among the raters and little confidence should be placed in the study results. McHugh presents a comparison matrix which shows that 0.60 - 0.79 shows a moderate agreement, 0.80 – 0.90 shows a strong agreement, and above 0.90 shows an almost perfect agreement between raters. Cohen's kappa was used to test inter-rater reliability on five ERT reports, one from each program category that was rated by the second coder. The results of the analysis indicated moderate to strong agreement on each of the five reports. An overall inter-rater reliability test of all five Reports showed a strong agreement with a score of 0.85 (Table 8).

TABLE 8: RESULTS OF INTER-RATER RELIABILITY TEST

Business: Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.750	.127	4.577	.000
N of Valid Cases		19			

Engineering: Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.880	.117	4.558	.000
	N of Valid Cases	19			

Health Sciences: Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.776	.117	5.825	.000
	N of Valid Cases	19			

Education: Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.907	.091	5.020	.000
	N of Valid Cases	19			

Information Technology : Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.848	.101	5.754	.000
	N of Valid Cases	19			

Combined: Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.858	.043	14.543	.000
	N of Valid Cases	95			

During phase II, the researcher sought the views of four (4) Experts from the CAA to establish the content validity of the faculty survey instrument. Based on the feedback received from all four experts, the questionnaire was finalized for the pilot study. Results of the pilot study were used to check for reliability of the scales. This helped identify flaws in the measurement scales and to finalize the instrument for the final study. Again, during Phase III, the researcher sought Expert opinion to determine content validity of the survey instrument. Based on the feedback received from all four experts, and results of the pilot study, the questionnaire was finalized. Interview guide in Phase III was finalized after a face-to-face discussion with an Expert at the CAA. It was decided that the presence of a quality culture should encompass four broad areas of

Quality Assurance – awareness of the system, development of an institutional framework, established processes and strategies for conducting evaluations, and demonstrating continuous quality improvement through institutional engagement. Interview questions were developed considering these elements.

3.8 Delimitation

The delimitation of this research largely rests in the sampling methodology adopted in the study. Due to time and resource constraints, the scope of the document review analysis in Phase I of the study only comprised of a sample of reviews that had undergone two cycles of accreditation reviews. Considering only two reports for comparison did not provide an accurate picture of improvement or lack thereof in certain areas of impact. For example, narratives in ERT Reports pertaining to initial accreditation largely commented on adequacy of proposed plans (e.g., tools for program monitoring, or hiring of faculty). It is only during Renewal of Accreditation reviews that the state of reality actually emerged. Including an additional cycle of accreditation review would have provided a much clearer picture of the impact. However, this approach was not adopted for reasons of practicality. Again, during the survey stage of Phase II, only faculty from identified institutions representing specific disciplines participated, thus limiting the scope of data collection. However, it was necessary to set this boundary to enable comparison of results from Phase I and Phase II of the research.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

Ethics and morals play an important part in educational and scientific research (Wellington, 2001; pp. 112). Ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge in a research while collecting data and while reporting findings of the study (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Further, ethical issues become more prominent when the research is highly collaborative, participatory, or political in nature. In this study, an ethical protocol refers to ethical measures that the researcher used to ensure that the rights, anonymity and privacy, and welfare of participants, the people and communities that form the focus of the research are protected and promoted. The researcher followed the four

basic ethical protocols suggested by Christians (2000). These include: (1) informed consent, (2) privacy and confidentiality, and (3) accuracy.

Informed consent: In an email to each institution contacted for the study, the researcher provided adequate information about the research by including an abstract, an approval from the CAA, and the approval of the Institutional Research Board of the institution of which the researcher is a Doctoral student. In a few cases, the researcher had to clear an Ethical Committee approval process at respective institutions before questionnaires were distributed to faculty members and QA representatives. In addition, the questionnaires used in the pilot study as well as the main study included an introductory page which sought an informed consent from each participant. The consent form indicated that participants were under no obligation to participate and could exit the survey without giving any reasons.

Privacy and Confidentiality: The researcher was obliged to protect the privacy of participants in the study and ensure confidentiality of data they provided. The information shared by participants in this research did not cause significant privacy or confidentiality concerns. Nevertheless, the researcher reinstated the assurance to maintain confidentiality of information shared during interviews at the time of contacting participants through emails and again during the interviews. The researcher was conscious of the compliance and conformity required by the CAA for ethical planning, administration, and reporting of research. The accreditation reports used in the study are not on the public domain. The researcher had therefore to obtain a written permission from the CAA to use the reports for research purposes. The researcher took adequate care not to reveal institutional names or program titles during data analysis and in the reporting of the results.

3.10 Role of the Researcher

At the time of my enrolment in Doctoral Studies at the British University in Dubai and during the time of conducting this research, I am a full-time employee of the Commission for Academic Accreditation, Ministry of Education, UAE. The nature of my work at the CAA has enriched my knowledge of UAE's tertiary education system, its quality assurance procedures, challenges, successes, and future aspirations. Because of this experience and knowledge gained from the

literature on impact analyses and methodologies, I was challenged to conduct the first study in the UAE, where the results generated would help the CAA obtain an insight and measure of the impact of its accreditation process and the organizational changes in universities that have occurred as a result of it. It will also serve as a solid starting point for future researchers in the region conducting such impact analyses. I acknowledge my inherent biases and limitations as a researcher and have produced a series of memos written through the course of the research. These memos provided consistent reflection on issues of methodology, analysis as well as interpretation of results. Also, the researcher made a conscious effort in the research design to look for rival explanations through alternative perspectives of the same phenomenon in order to establish the credibility of the results. When multiple analytical approaches yield similar results, the confidence in the resulting findings increases and researcher bias is reduced (Patton, 2014). That said, I believe my day-to-day experience in dealing with various concerns of higher education institutions ranging from admission issues, student/faculty complaints, coordination with subject review experts, faculty and QA staff, managing Quality Assurance Workshops and my knowledge gained on these topics will contribute to the professional expertise needed to carry out this research successfully.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study and discusses the results in light of the research aims and objectives. The identified gap and contribution to knowledge was investigated along one main research question: Have the UAE Standards for Licensure and Accreditation had an impact on the quality of higher education provision in Ministry licensed non-federal Higher Education institutions? From this main research question, three sub-questions were derived:

1. Do External Review Team Reports of the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) indicate that external program accreditation has resulted in tangible improvements to academic programs offered by UAE institutions? Which areas have shown the greatest positive impact and which have shown the least positive impact?
2. Has accreditation had an impact at the academic unit level from the perspectives of faculty involved in the accreditation process? Do faculty opinions vary based on the level of their involvement in the accreditation process?
3. Has accreditation resulted in consequential changes to an institution's internal quality culture?

An appropriate methodological approach and research design were adopted to conduct the study. In order to answer the research questions, two distinct approaches are used. The first approach which answers the first research question uses the “production-measurement” view stated by Lindsay (1992). Here, quality is treated as synonymous to performance, and therefore the discussions on the impact of accreditation revolve around how well outcomes are achieved compared to a pre-set measurement. The second approach, which addresses the second and third research question, uses the “stakeholder judgment” view in which discussions are based on the views of key actors involved and exposes imponderable elements of the processes and its outcomes from an alternate perspective. This chapter explains the analysis of data collected during each phase of the study along the three guiding research questions. Finally, the results from each phase are triangulated to answer the main research question.

4.2 Phase I: Analysis, Results, and Discussion

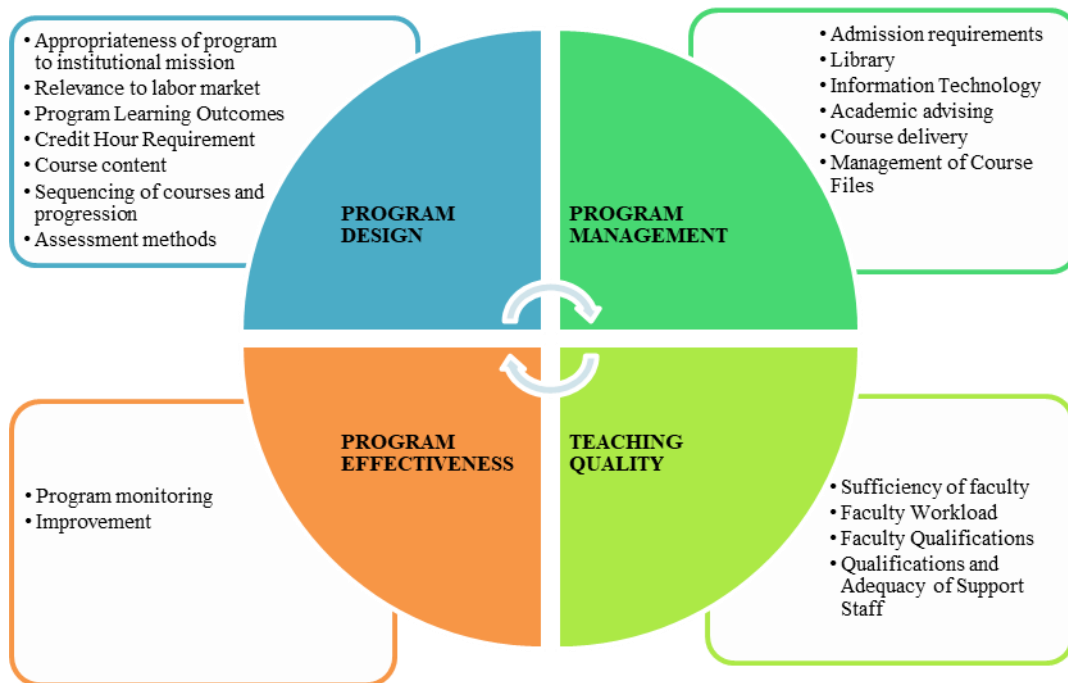
Research Question: Do External Review Team Reports of the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) indicate that mandatory external program accreditation has resulted in tangible improvements to academic programs offered by UAE institutions? Which areas have shown the greatest positive impact and which have shown the least positive impact?

Qualitative Content Analysis was used to analyze data from ERT Reports. Qualitative Content Analysis can be used in an inductive or deductive manner to support the research objectives (Elo et al., 2014). Deductive Content Analysis was considered an appropriate methodology for the analysis of ERT Reports. The process began with coding of raw data while at the same time constructing categories that capture characteristics relevant to the study. A deductive qualitative content analysis involves three phases: (1) preparation (2) organization, and (3) reporting of results. The preparation phase for this study involved selection of ERT Reports that met the sampling criteria discussed in the Methodology Chapter. The Reports were extracted from the CAA's Document Management database "CORE". The organization phase comprised two stages.

In the first stage, a matrix was developed and data from sampled ERT Reports was coded to categories. The coding was done on excel sheets separately for each program covering two intervention periods. The analysis grid had two dimensions to it- (1) ERT Evaluation, and (2) Requirements & Suggestions which correspond with the structure of CAA's ERT Reports. The first one assembles information on the evaluation of the program (in the form of statements) made by the ERT, while the second brings together the requirements and suggestions offered by the ERT for compliance and improvement. Every sampled report for initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation was read and individually coded alongside identified impact areas. Specifically, four impact areas were identified that fit well within the scope of this study. These are: (1) Impact on Program Design (2) Impact on Program Management (3) Impact on Teaching Quality, and (4) Impact on Program Effectiveness. The variables under each impact category were derived from the CAA's Standards for Licensure and Accreditation, the content and structure of ERT Reports, from a review of literature, and the researcher's knowledge and

expertise. ERT narratives relating to impact areas were thus grouped into categories as shown in figure 15 below:

FIGURE 15: IMPACT CATEGORIES



Next, the coded narratives in the matrix were rated with the help of the Quality Rubric and scoring chart developed by the researcher. A second coder voluntarily agreed to participate in the rating exercise. After comparing the rating sheets, inter-coder reliability was tested, and Kappa value was recorded at 0.85 showing a strong agreement between raters. The researcher considers that the reporting of qualitative results is best presented in conjunction with the statistical analysis that follows. Flick (2014) states that linking qualitative and quantitative results help converge, mutually confirm, and support the same conclusions. It helps in the presentation of a fuller picture of the study. A close comparative reading of extracted narratives from fifty (50) ERT Reports is used as supporting evidence for the quantitative analysis. The purpose is to present a blueprint of issues identified by ERT's during both review periods thereby substantiating the results of the parametric tests with detailed descriptions.

The first Research Question aimed to evaluate if there was a statistically significant improvement in the quality of academic programs as a result of implementing CAA Accreditation Standards on identified impact areas of the curricular domain- namely, program design, program management, teaching quality and program effectiveness at two sampled points in time - initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation. This was accomplished by statistically comparing base-line and end-line scores assigned to each impact variable.

4.2.1 Test of Normality

Prior to conducting inferential analysis, the assumption of normality was tested using Shapiro-Wilk's W test for each impact variable (Table 9). Data for Program Design, Program Management, and Teaching Quality for the two periods of intervention were found normally distributed (p value > 0.05). However, the Program Effectiveness index was not indicative of a normal distribution. Data transformation taking the log/square root of the dependent variable also did not show a significant p value. Hence inferential analysis was restricted to that of a non-parametric nature.

TABLE 9: TEST OF NORMALITY

Shapiro-Wilk	Statistic	df	Sig (p-value)
Program Design-IA	0.957	25	0.355
Program Design-RA	0.967	25	0.571
Program Management-IA	0.932	25	0.097
Program Management-RA	0.963	25	0.470
Teaching Quality-IA	0.966	25	0.553
Teaching Quality-RA	0.933	25	0.104
Program Effectiveness-IA	0.798	25	0.000
Program Effectiveness-RA	0.795	25	0.000

$p > 0.05$

4.2.2 Descriptive Statistics – Research Question 1

Descriptive statistics depict the center, spread, and shape of distributions and are helpful as preliminary tools for data descriptions. The spread of data was interpreted using measures of central tendency, and measures of dispersion as shown by the standard deviation (SD). The

dependent variables are identified as (1) Impact on Program Design (2) Impact on Program Management (3) Impact on Teaching Quality, and (4) Impact on Program Effectiveness. Seven independent items were used to measure the impact of accreditation on Program Design: appropriateness of program to institutional mission, relevance to labor market, program learning outcomes, credit hour requirement, course content, sequencing of courses and progression, and assessment methods. Six items were identified to measure the impact on Program Management: admission requirements, library holdings, information technology, academic advising, course delivery, and management of course files. Teaching Quality is assessed by four items: sufficiency of faculty, faculty workload, faculty qualifications, qualifications and adequacy of support staff, and Program Effectiveness is assessed by two independent items - program monitoring and program improvement.

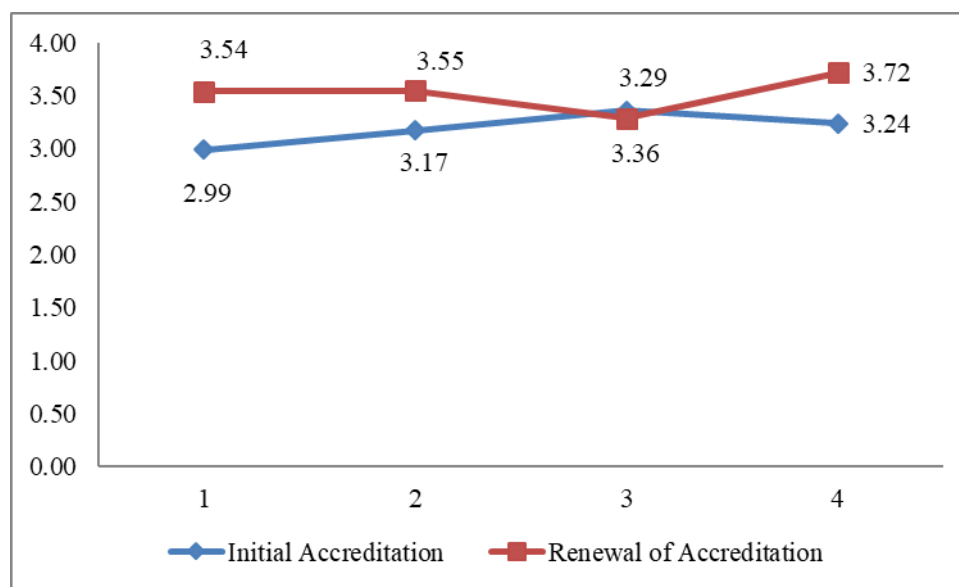
TABLE 10: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF IMPACT VARIABLES

	Mean	Median	SD	Max	Min	Skewness	SE (Skewness)	Kurtosis	SE (Kurtosis)
Program Design-IA	3.00	3.00	0.68	4.29	1.86	0.16	0.46	-0.98	0.90
Program Design-RA	3.55	3.57	0.63	4.71	2.00	-0.30	0.46	0.49	0.90
Program Management-IA	3.17	3.33	0.63	4.33	2.17	-0.29	0.46	-0.90	0.90
Program Management-RA	3.55	3.50	0.63	4.67	1.83	-0.59	0.46	1.04	0.90
Teaching Quality-IA	3.37	3.50	0.67	4.50	2.00	-0.31	0.46	-0.29	0.90
Teaching Quality-RA	3.29	3.67	0.94	4.75	1.25	-0.61	0.46	-0.27	0.90
Program Effectiveness-IA	3.24	3.50	0.94	4.00	1.00	-1.23	0.46	0.71	0.90
Program Effectiveness-RA	3.72	4.00	0.82	4.50	1.50	-1.59	0.46	2.79	0.90

Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA) for each group - Initial Accreditation (IA) and Renewal of Accreditation (RA) was analyzed separately. EDA for the variables Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality and Program Effectiveness for the 25 sampled cases was conducted to determine if the measures met the assumptions of normality. The analyses included statistical tests for normality employing z-tests for skewness and kurtosis. Data analysis for

Program Design indicated that the measure was normally distributed with a mean of 3, a median of 3, and a standard deviation equal to 0.68. For Program Management, the measure was normally distributed and negatively skewed with a mean of 3.17, a median of 3.33, and a standard deviation equal to 0.63. Similarly, Teaching quality and Program Effectiveness showed mean values of 3.37 and 3.24 and median values of 3.50 and 3.50 respectively. There was not much difference in mean and median values and all variables except Program Effectiveness showed a significance of $p > 0.05$.

FIGURE 16: MEAN VALUES OF THE FOUR IMPACT VARIABLES



4.2.3 Inferential Analysis - Research Question 1

The impact of CAA Accreditation on Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness was analysed using Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test estimates each data point's deviation from the hypothetical mean and assigns ranks in ascending order. Negative ranks are assigned to the deviation values (Sprent and Smeeton, 2001). The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to test the following hypotheses:

Null Hypothesis H_01 : There is no significant improvement in Program Design scores between initial accreditation (IA) and renewal of accreditation (RA) reviews.

Alternative Hypothesis H_11 : There is a significant improvement in Program Design scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Null Hypothesis H₀2: There is no significant improvement in Program Management scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Alternative Hypothesis H₁2: There is a significant improvement in Program Management scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Null Hypothesis H₀3: There is no significant improvement in Teaching Quality scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Alternative Hypothesis H₁3: There is a significant improvement in Teaching Quality scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Null Hypothesis H₀4: There is no significant improvement in Program Effectiveness scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Alternative Hypothesis H₁4: There is a significant improvement in Program Effectiveness scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Each of the hypotheses is tested in the order listed above.

Null Hypothesis H₀1: There is no significant improvement in Program Design scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Alternative Hypothesis H₁1: There is a significant improvement in Program Design scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Seven independent items were coded under Program Design. For each item, the scoring pattern ranged from 5- very good, 4- good, 3-fair, 2- poor, to 1- very poor. Changes in program design between base-line and end-line scores were assessed using Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 11 below.

TABLE 11: WILCOXON SIGNED-RANK TEST STATISTIC FOR PROGRAM DESIGN

Program Design Index- IA & RA		N	Mean Rank	z-value	p-value
Appropriateness of program to institutional mission-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	4 ^a	3.50	-1.043	0.297
	Positive Ranks	5 ^b	6.20		
	Ties	16 ^c			
	Total	25			
Relevance to labor market-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	6 ^d	10.33	-1.084	0.278
	Positive Ranks	12 ^e	9.08		
	Ties	7 ^f			
	Total	25			

Program Design Index- IA & RA		N	Mean Rank	z-value	p-value
Program Learning Outcomes-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	1 ^g	5.50	-3.789	0.000**
	Positive Ranks	19 ^h	10.76		
	Ties	4 ⁱ			
	Total	24			
Credit Hour Requirement-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	2 ^j	4.00	-2.496	0.013**
	Positive Ranks	10 ^k	7.00		
	Ties	13			
	Total	25			
Course content-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	3 ^m	8.33	-2.084	0.037*
	Positive Ranks	12 ⁿ	7.92		
	Ties	10 ^o			
	Total	25			
Sequencing of courses and progression-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	4 ^p	8.13	-2.583	0.010**
	Positive Ranks	15 ^q	10.50		
	Ties	6 ^r			
	Total	25			
Assessment methods-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	4 ^s	4.50	-2.232	0.026*
	Positive Ranks	10 ^t	8.70		
	Ties	5 ^u			
	Total	19			

****p<0.01, *p<0.05**

Table 10 provides some interesting data to compare initial accreditation (base-line) and renewal of accreditation (end-line) scores for Program Design. The end-line measurements (RA) of Program Learning Outcomes in nineteen (19) cases showed an increase in scores; four cases recorded no change and in one (1) case the base-line measurement (IA) indicated a higher score. As for compliance with Credit Hour Requirement, ten (10) cases recorded an increase in end-line measurements, two (2) cases recorded a higher base-line score (IA), and thirteen (13) cases recorded no change in base-line and end-line scores. For Course Content, (12) cases noted an increase in end-line (RA) scores, ten (10) cases recorded no change in base-line and end-line scores, and at least three (3) cases recorded a higher base-line score (IA) than the end-line score (RA). For the item Sequencing of Courses and Progression, fifteen (15) cases recorded an improvement over the baseline scores, six (6) cases noted no change in scores over the two periods, and in four (4) cases, the baseline scores (IA) were higher. Finally, for Assessment

Methods, ten (10) cases recorded an improvement in end-line scores (RA), four (4) cases recorded a higher base-line score (IA) indicating a negative rank, and five (5) cases showed no change between the base-line and end-line scores.

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test shows that the p-value for program learning outcomes (0.00), credit hour requirement (0.01), course content (0.04), sequencing of courses and progression (0.01), and assessment methods (0.03) is less than 0.05. It is therefore concluded that the observed differences between both measures (IA vs. RA) for these items are significant. However, no statistically significant improvements in scores of Appropriateness of Program to Institutional Mission ($p = 0.297$), and Relevance to Labor Market ($p = 0.278$) were noted between the two review periods. Thus, the Null Hypothesis is rejected and it is assumed that CAA accreditation has resulted in significant improvements to Program Design.

Null Hypothesis H₀2: There is no significant improvement in Program Management scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Alternative Hypothesis H₁2: There is a significant improvement in Program Management scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

To test whether or not program management scores improved during renewal of accreditation, Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was conducted. Six independent items were coded under Program Management. For each item, the scoring pattern ranged from 5- very good, 4- good, 3- fair, 2- poor, to 1- very poor. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 12 below:

TABLE 12: WILCOXON SIGNED-RANK TEST STATISTIC FOR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Program Management Index- IA & RA		N	Mean Rank	z-value	p-value
Admission requirements-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	.00	-2.873	0.004**
	Positive Ranks	10 ^b	5.50		
	Ties	15 ^c			
	Total	25			
Library-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	3 ^d	12.67	-1.926	0.054*
	Positive Ranks	14 ^e	8.21		
	Ties	7 ^f			
	Total	24			

Program Management Index- IA & RA		N	Mean Rank	z-value	p-value
Academic advising-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	5 ^g	8.00	-1.487	0.137
	Positive Ranks	11 ^h	8.73		
	Ties	8 ⁱ			
	Total	24			
Course delivery-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	5 ^j	6.90	-1.182	0.237
	Positive Ranks	9 ^k	7.83		
	Ties	10 ^l			
	Total	24			
Information Technology-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	3 ^m	5.00	-2.221	0.026*
	Positive Ranks	10 ⁿ	7.60		
	Ties	11 ^o			
	Total	24			
Management of Course Files-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	5 ^p	6.00	-0.284	0.776
	Positive Ranks	6 ^q	6.00		
	Ties	8 ^r			
	Total	19			

****p<0.01, *p<0.05**

The output generated by the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test indicates that for Admission Requirements, ten (10) cases recorded an improvement over the baseline scores and fifteen (15) cases recorded no change in scores over the two periods. As for adequacy of Library Holdings, three (3) cases showed a negative rank indicating a higher base-line score (IA). However, fourteen (14) cases showed an improvement in the end-line scores and seven (7) cases showed no change in scores over both periods. For Information Technology, ten (10) cases recorded an improvement in end-line scores, eleven (11) cases showed no difference between the scores, and in three (3) cases the base-line (IA) scores were higher than the end-line (RA) scores.

The analysis indicates that three items (Admission Requirements, Adequacy of Library Holdings, and Information Technology) had a significant impact ($p<0.05$) on Program Management between initial and renewal of accreditation reviews. There were no statistically significant improvements noted in Academic Advising ($p=0.14$), Course Delivery ($p=0.24$), and Management of Course Files ($p=0.78$) between the two review periods. Based on these observations, the hypothesis that there is significant improvement in Program Management scores between initial and renewal of accreditation is partially accepted, and the null hypothesis

is partially rejected. Hence, it can be concluded that CAA program accreditation has resulted in partial improvement as far as Program Management is concerned.

Null Hypothesis H0: There is no significant improvement in Teaching Quality between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Alternative Hypothesis H1: There is a significant improvement in Teaching Quality between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Teaching Quality comprised four independent items: Sufficiency of Faculty, Faculty Workload, Faculty Qualifications, and Support Staff Sufficiency and Qualifications. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was conducted to see if Teaching Quality scores improved between initial and renewal of accreditation reviews. The results are presented in Table 13 below.

TABLE 13: WILCOXON SIGNED-RANK TEST STATISTIC FOR TEACHING QUALITY

Teaching Quality Index- IA & RA		N	Mean Rank	z-value	p-value
Sufficiency of faculty-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	9 ^a	8.67	-0.539	0.590
	Positive Ranks	7 ^b	8.29		
	Ties	8 ^c			
	Total	24			
Faculty Workload-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	11 ^d	10.09	-2.283	0.022*
	Positive Ranks	5 ^e	5.00		
	Ties	8 ^f			
	Total	24			
Faculty qualifications-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	6 ^g	10.75	-1.567	0.117
	Positive Ranks	14 ^h	10.39		
	Ties	5 ⁱ			
	Total	25			
Support staff-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	3 ^j	4.67	0.000	1.000
	Positive Ranks	4 ^k	3.50		
	Ties	16 ^l			
	Total	23			

***p<0.05**

The output generated by the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test indicates that compliance with faculty Workload requirements showed a significant p value (0.02) which is less than 0.05. In eleven cases, base-line scores (IA) pertaining to compliance with Faculty Workload were higher than

the end-line (RA) scores. Only in five (5) cases, a positive rank denoting a higher end-line score was recorded. For the remaining eight (8) cases, there was no change in base-line and end-line scores. The analysis also shows that the remaining items in the Teaching Quality index did not return a significant p value- Sufficiency of Faculty (p=0.59), Faculty Qualifications (p=0.12), and Support Staff Qualifications and Sufficiency (p=1.00). Overall results compel the acceptance of the Null Hypothesis and we assume that CAA accreditation has not resulted in a significant improvement in Teaching Quality.

Null Hypothesis H₀4: There is no significant improvement in Program Effectiveness scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

Alternative Hypothesis H₁4: There is a significant improvement in Program Effectiveness scores between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation reviews.

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was run to confirm whether or not program effectiveness scores improved during renewal of accreditation. Program Effectiveness was measured using two independent items: Program Monitoring and Program Improvement. For each item, the scoring pattern ranged from 5- very good, 4- good, 3- fair, 2- poor, to 1- very poor. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 14 below.

TABLE 14: WILCOXON SIGNED-RANK TEST STATISTIC FOR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Program Effectiveness Index- IA & RA		N	Mean Rank	z-value	p-value
Monitoring-RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	5 ^a	7.40	-1.667	0.096
	Positive Ranks	11 ^b	9.00		
	Ties	9 ^c			
	Total	25			
Improvement- RA vs. IA	Negative Ranks	4 ^d	8.38	-1.877	0.060
	Positive Ranks	12 ^e	8.54		
	Ties	9 ^f			
	Total	25			

***p<0.05**

As the p-value is greater than 0.05 for both items – program monitoring and program improvement, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean Program Effectiveness scores between initial and renewal of accreditation. It is noted from the output

generated (Table 13) that for Program Monitoring five (5) cases recorded a higher base-line score (IA) than end-line score (RA). In eleven (11) cases, the end-line scores were higher denoting a positive rank, and the remaining nine (9) cases showed no difference in scores. For Program Improvement, twelve (12) cases had higher end-line (RA) scores, four (4) recorded higher base-line scores (IA) showing a negative rank and the remaining nine (9) did not show any variation in scores between the two review periods. The overall results necessitate the acceptance of the Null Hypothesis and it is assumed that CAA accreditation has not resulted in a significant improvement in Program Effectiveness

A summary of the quantitative analysis that aided in answering the first research question is presented in Table 15 below:

TABLE 15: SUMMARY OF STATISTICAL ANALYSIS: RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Hypotheses	Type of Statistical Test	Decision
There is no significant difference in Program Design between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation	Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test	Rejected
There is no significant difference in Program Management between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation		Partially Accepted
There is no significant difference in Teaching Quality between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation		Accepted
There is no significant difference in Program Effectiveness between initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation		Accepted

4.2.4 Discussion of Results- Research Question 1

From the analysis of ERT Reports of the CAA, it is clear that significant progress has been made in areas identified within the curricular domain. The large number of Requirements, Suggestions, and commendations of good practice noted by review teams in ERT Reports validate that UAE institutions have committed themselves to ensuring and improving the standard of academic programs. In the first cycle of accreditation, institutional effort was most visible at the front-end of the process, especially in developing and refining policies, practices, and processes relating to teaching and learning and devising tools to measure their effectiveness. ERT Requirements for changes have been considered by institutions in making amendments to curriculum and

processes, and the implementation of these changes are evident in review team reports generated during the second cycle of accreditation. A close comparative reading of identified themes from twenty-five Reports over both cycles of accreditation provided some reflections on the results of the statistical analysis presented earlier. It is worth emphasizing that this review reflects situations that pertained at the time of the ERT visit during the two cycles of accreditation. It does not consider the changes that were implemented by institutions post accreditation. In the area of Program Design, most significant improvements are noted in mapping of program learning outcomes to relevant level descriptors of the *QFEmirates*, setting appropriate credit hour requirements for programs, in content and sequencing of courses, and in devising appropriate assessments for evaluating student learning outcomes. There is a growing interest amongst higher education institutions in achieving international and professional accreditation of programs which is helpful in maintaining and enhancing academic standards. Each of the impact areas are discussed below:

Program Learning Outcomes: The mapping of program outcomes to courses and course outcomes was unclear or at a very abstract level during initial accreditation reviews. It generated requirements for institutions to revisit the goals and objectives, review and revise them to make them internally consistent, coherent, measurable and relevant to the proposed programs. In contrast, substantial improvement in program goals and outcomes and a mapping with relevant grade descriptors of the UAE Qualifications Framework (*QFEmirates*) was evident in all programs reviewed for renewal of accreditation. Although ERT comments in certain instances suggested fine tuning of learning outcomes and program goals to meet higher order skills, the linking of program goals to *QFEmirates* grade descriptors was seen as a welcome development and demonstrated good practice. Program goals were found well-expressed and broadly rigorous in most re-accreditation reports. A positive influence of ABET accreditation is seen in at least two Engineering Reports considered for this analysis. The ERT noted that these programs had adopted 11 Program Learning Outcomes, which are similar to the a-k outcomes required by the EAC of ABET demonstrating sound alignment between program goals and learning outcomes. The narratives in ERT Reports confirmed indicated a significant improvement in scores during the renewal of accreditation cycle.

Credit Hour Requirement: In most programs reviewed for initial accreditation, degree requirements in terms of course credits were well thought-out and described in standard academic terms as required by the Standards. ERT comments indicate that credit hour requirements were consistent with international practice, except in a few cases where it was noted to be slightly higher than regional and international norms. In two of the Health Science programs, ERT's raised Requirements for re-distribution of credits with the aim of strengthening the overall structure of the curriculum. There is also an indication that institutions have described credit hour requirements accurately in relevant institutional publications, with few exceptions. Credit Hour requirements for the majority of programs reviewed for renewal of accreditation met the minimum number of credit hour expectation of the Standards. ERT commentary on renewal of accreditation reports generally indicate that degree requirements are consistent with accepted international practice.

Sequencing and Progression of Courses: Sequencing of courses was found mostly erratic in programs reviewed for initial accreditation inviting mixed reactions of ERT's. Comments in ERT Reports highlighted the requirement to review prerequisites and ensure they are appropriate and necessary to meet the learning objectives of the subsequent courses. In a few cases, an overlap of content between courses was noted, while in others, erroneous claims were made that some courses are prerequisite for others, whereas in reality the follow-up courses made little or no use of the alleged prerequisites. In one Health Science program, it was noted that the curriculum was compiled in a hasty fashion with disconnects between topics and sequence of courses. Only a few programs during initial accreditation reviews were deemed by ERT's as following accepted academic practices with an appropriate mix of subject matter at the foundation and advanced levels.

Although renewal of accreditation reports revealed mixed reactions from ERT's, slight adjustments in the curriculum were noticed since previous accreditation, particularly changes made to co/pre-requisites of courses. ERT's generally confirmed that these changes were reasonable and improved the quality of the programs reflecting a logical progression. One of the programs received the commendation of the ERT which stated that the progressive structure of the program was aligned with internationally accepted practice and gives an impression of a fully mature program. In one report although the program structure was appropriate, the ERT

suggested that some of the major courses would be significantly strengthened by a critical review and revision of course sequencing and prerequisites to ensure logical flow and pedagogical development of program content. It is noticed that the second cycle of review has witnessed significant improvements on course sequencing and progression accompanied by more recommendations for improvement suggested by ERT's.

Assessment Methods: ERT Reports on initial accreditation indicate that institutions have identified several methods for assessing student learning outcomes. However, information provided in Self-studies on the scope and focus of assessment tools often made it difficult for ERTs to assess the relevance, rigor and appropriateness of the assessment plan or how the plan is aligned with intended course learning outcomes. Other key issues highlighted in ERT Reports on initial accreditation indicate that few assessment practices fail to progressively prepare students for higher order skills. Extensive use of multiple-choice, true-false, and fill-in-the-blank questions on examinations and shortage of reflective questions especially in higher level courses were highlighted as a major cause of concern in almost all programs reviewed for initial accreditation. Although a slight improvement is noted during renewal of accreditation, some issues noted during initial accreditation seem to re-emerge during the second accreditation cycle. For example, out of the five business programs, only one showed improvement in the usage of appropriate assessment methods and demonstrated that program outcomes are being met. Some issues highlighted by ERT's in renewal of accreditation ERT Reports include:

- Mismatch between table of assessment credit mentioned in the syllabus and the actual assessments employed
- Absence of a rubric for grading assessments; out of class work
- Absence of a statement of methods used to authenticate student work
- Absence of a mechanism to assign individual student credit based on the relative contribution for group projects
- Use of participation and attendance as an assessment metric
- Difficult to relate course learning outcomes to program learning outcomes
- Discrepancy between the assessment descriptions and the assessments conducted - insufficient evidence that course content specified in syllabus was actually covered and assessed.

- Inconsistency in weightings given to assignments

Despite these recurring issues particularly with Business programs, many other reports indicated that student assignments exceeded expectations and performance compared to similar international programs.

Appropriateness of Program to Institutional Mission: In a majority of programs reviewed for initial accreditation, ERT comments on the appropriateness of the program to institutional mission were generally positive indicating that institutions have established sound governance systems that are geared to support proposed programs. Renewal of Accreditation reports demonstrated a tight fit between the programs and its purposes with the institutional vision and mission statements. It was noted by ERT's that established policies for annual review of Mission and Vision statements have led to slight modifications, especially the emphasis on research owing to introduction of graduate level programs in a few institutions. The revisions had received the support and approval of the Governing Board showing the continuing support of institutional governance in these matters. The results of the statistical analysis indicate that between initial and renewal of accreditation, institutions maintained a tight fit between the programs and its purposes with the institutional vision and mission statements -a reason why the scores did not show a significant difference between the two review periods.

Relevance to Labor Market: The CAA Standards state that a program submitted for initial accreditation demonstrates that it fills a need in the society, and provides a convincing rationale for the introduction of the program. ERT comments on a majority of initial accreditation reports indicated mixed reactions on the feasibility analysis. Only a few programs reviewed for initial accreditation demonstrated a strong need substantiated by surveys on potential students and the employment opportunities for graduates. ERT suggestions highlight the importance of advisory boards to help an early buy-in and ownership of programs. Feasibility analysis of the reviewed Health Science programs, for example, lacked evidence of a strong societal need or a commitment from stakeholders. There was absence of discussion involving potential employers and other stakeholders in the programs reviewed at least two reports indicated the requirement for a complete revision of the curriculum based on the review of needs assessment by the ERT.

A similar situation was noticed in several of the renewal of accreditation reports. While a few programs highlighted the positive opinion of employers, students and alumni interviewed during site visits, other programs indicated a decline in enrolment data which was in contrast to the projections stated in the applications for initial accreditation. This gave an indication that the program offering is not distinctive and attractive in the market place. Most self-studies were largely silent on the role of external advisory boards. Even where a few institutions indicated that advisory boards met occasionally, its influence on the development, formation and the future direction of programs was not clearly evident. In a few cases, data indicated that enrollment was much below projections due to increased competition from new comparable programs. For example, one health science program which was judged by the ERT as not presenting a strong needs analysis during the initial accreditation review, did not show any marked improvement in the renewal of accreditation review either. In the words of the ERT “the graduates of this program were mostly employed as assistants to current faculty”. Major concerns in renewal of accreditation reports were on inactive advisory boards, lack of crucial evidence confirming the availability of internships, and graduate experience of who found employment during their education. Absence of survey of recent employment opportunities within the sector was a common omission noted in most self-studies. One report stated that the self-study omitted any discussion on the ways in which the program met the needs of graduates and the society in general. Statistical analysis indicates that between initial and renewal of accreditation institutions have not shown much improvement in this area.

While there are truly big challenges in leading today’s complex organizations such as universities, it can be said with some evidence that external evaluation has in fact brought about improvements in areas such as adherence to admission policies that comply with the requirements of the Standards, improvements to library holdings, and the use of information technology in delivery of programs. Academic advising and student support activities within UAE institutions are found to be generally sound. However, the statistical analysis did not reflect significant improvement in this area as self-studies presented during renewal of accreditation failed to reflect on how these services have been continually improved from the first cycle of accreditation. An area that still lacks complete compliance with the Standards is course delivery and management of course files. Most issues noted during initial accreditation seemed to reoccur during the second cycle of review as indicated below:

Admission Requirements: ERT comments on Initial Accreditation Reports indicate that admission policies are consistent with the Standards and the nature of proposed programs and are at large included in all relevant institutional publications. Minor Requirements for changes pertain to conditional admission policies and meeting English Language Requirements. All of the programs reviewed for renewal of accreditation fully met the admission criteria required by the Standards. Student records sampled during reviews showed full compliance with the Standards. Minor Suggestions in ERT Reports stressed the need for meeting English Language proficiency, and the use of preparatory programs for those who do not meet English language requirements for full admission.

Library Holdings: Programs reviewed for initial accreditation showed mixed reactions of ERTs pertaining to the adequacy of library holdings. ERT comments on a majority of programs indicate that the library is sufficiently equipped with computers and contains a modest number of journals. The collection of e-textbooks, e-journals, and reference material are reported as adequate in most programs. In addition, students and faculty had complete access to electronic information including databases and journals. ERT comments also highlight the high degree of support provided by library staff. However, a few programs also indicate ERT concerns on the need to significantly increase the space, collection, and staffing to adequately support the program as it expands. In some cases, a budget for expansion was provided but the Application did not outline how the administration will expand the collection to support the proposed program. Renewal of accreditation reports show that library holdings and services have greatly improved and are generally adequate to run the programs. Narratives in renewal of accreditation Reports provide suggestions for greater participation of faculty in the selection of text and other materials needed to support the program. Only in one case, it was noted that although many texts were current, they appeared not to have been accessed by students to any extent. Further, it was noted that only limited numbers of students had registered to the library portal, suggesting that many do not use the system. These were minor issues, and in general students and faculty members showed satisfaction with library services. However, ERT commentary in most programs reviewed for renewal of accreditation indicated that there was no mention of the library budget or its adequacy to meet future needs of programs.

Information Technology: In general, ERT commentary on all programs reviewed during initial accreditation suggest satisfaction with the adequacy of IT infrastructure, security, back-up arrangements, and disaster recovery plans. Renewal of accreditation reports confirm the adequacy of IT services in all programs. Student, staff and faculty interviewed by ERTs had a generally favorable opinion of the facilities. IT support was adequate and resourced with suitably qualified technicians. However, the effectiveness of IT services was discussed only in a few self-studies presented during the second cycle of accreditation. Faculty and student feedback indicated minor issues with IT services, especially during online registration of courses. A few institutions received the commendation of the ERT for providing exceptional technical support for learning.

Academic Advising: The statistical analysis showed no statistically significant improvements in Academic Advising between the two review periods. A comparative reading of ERT commentary on academic advising provided to students' show that it is generally satisfactory across all programs. Adequacy of personal counseling and career services are commonly stated in all Reports reviewed for initial accreditation. Narratives in Reports indicate that students are satisfied with the service they receive. A few institutions received specific commendations on their student services. One of them maintains a comprehensive Career Development Center engaging in a wide range of services from job fairs to resume development, training in interview processes, and internship coordination. In a second case, an online career advising service was provided to students. Similarly, narratives in renewal of accreditation reports suggest that students appear well supported and have access to counseling, health and general administrative advice. Advisory services are delivered by full-time faculty and students interviewed by ERTs were satisfied with advising services. Institutions are reported to be providing additional support to students by establishing centers for learning development and student success. A common weakness noted in most Re-Accreditation Reports was the absence of any discussion on continuous improvement of advising services. The results of the statistical analysis did not show a significant improvement between initial and renewal of accreditation scores because institutions continued to maintain high quality of the academic advising process and support provided to students.

Course Delivery and Management of Course Files: During the first cycle of accreditation, only a few reports indicated that basic course structures, the range of pedagogical techniques employed, incorporation of technology and related instructional practices were in keeping with international standards. In the remaining programs, a key issue was the absence of a weekly schedule or when present, inadequate information on topics covered. In most cases, the weekly schedule was not aligned with the assessment scheme. A general notion that arises from the comparison of all initial accreditation reports is that little thought has been devoted to the actual delivery of programs. Persistent issues were noted in the rigor of course delivery and assessment, as evidenced in the course files viewed by the ERTs in all but a few cases during renewal of accreditation. Common issues noted in reports pertaining to renewal of accreditation relate to:

- Instructor's comprehensive report indicates not covering planned and documented course content
- No indication of what was not covered and how it affects achievement of CLOs
- No corrective action taken by the QA system
- Faculty load and spreading of instructional resources across courses within concentrations
- Standardized text used in syllabi to describe delivery of courses- delivery of courses should differ as it relates to content and type of courses
- Only a few courses identify the mode of instruction in the teaching schedule
- students do not encounter diverse teaching styles and approaches to learning, and different interpretations of subject content
- little information in the self-study about the effectiveness of the teaching strategies and a discussion how the teaching strategies adopted are consistent with generally accepted practice

Scant evidence of improvement is noticed in areas identified under Teaching Quality. For example, failure of institutional policies on faculty workload is apparent from ERT commentary during the second accreditation cycle. The ERT Reports drew attention to the noncompliance of faculty workloads with the requirements of the Standards. Excessive workloads are also an indication of insufficiency in the number of qualified faculty members to effectively deliver programs. During both initial and renewal of accreditation reviews, adequacy and qualifications of support staff are generally in compliance with the Standards.

Faculty Workload Compliance- The Standards stipulate a maximum of 9 credit hours for faculty teaching solely on graduate programs and 12 credit hours for faculty teaching solely on undergraduate programs. Where faculty teach a combination of courses- some at graduate level and some at undergraduate level, the intermediate maximum is calculated and not expected to exceed limits. Initial Accreditation Reports expressed satisfaction that planned/proposed teaching loads are within the limit allowed by the Standards. This constraint on teaching loads is imposed to facilitate faculty research activity and to take account of related administrative responsibilities. Only in a few instances teaching loads were found to be relatively high when viewed in the context of research requirements. Because Initial Accreditation Reports indicate compliance based on projections of faculty that will be hired to serve the programs, ERT commentary on IA Reports cautions institutions on the challenges associated with shifts in teaching assignments or increase in section sizes as courses are delivered and new specializations are introduced.

In contrast to these observations, Reports on renewal of accreditation portrayed a different side of the faculty workload situation. ERT discussions with faculty during renewal of accreditation reviews identified concerns of lack of time within the normal workload to develop fully the research activities that are expected of them. In one case, the faculty workload in both graduate and undergraduate courses was considered as equivalent, thus violating the Standards. In addition, problems with large class sizes were reported that further exacerbated workload concerns. With offering of additional specializations, insufficient faculty resources emerged as a common problem across many programs. The time requirement to prepare and deliver multiple unique courses impaired the goals of research-driven instruction. ERT suggestions to remedy the situation points towards carefully reassessing the projection of faculty needs and developing a clear plan for faculty hiring that is fully funded to adequately support the programs.

Sufficiency of Faculty: ERT commentary on the adequacy of faculty hiring plans of programs during initial accreditation show mixed reactions of ERTs. In a few cases, the policies were found satisfactory. In others, the documentation did not contain all the material that is specified in the Standards. For example, ERT comments in a Report stated “...it does not lay out criteria for appointment to the academic ranks, nor precise details of what is required for promotion between those ranks. In view of these findings, there is a question regarding the plans for ensuring sufficient faculty numbers to support the existing programs alongside the proposed

Program”. A few programs indicated ERT satisfaction on the adequacy of current plans to recruit faculty needed to support the program. For instance, one Report stated, “...the institution is committed to appoint the Dean of the School of Education and the Graduate Program Director, prior to the start of the programs. This is in addition to the teaching faculty identified in the Timed Action Plan”. ERT comments in renewal of accreditation reports suggest that there is severe shortage of faculty to deliver the programs effectively. It was noted that most faculty taught courses outside of their field of specialization and the proportion of part-time faculty was higher than that of full-time faculty. In addition, excessive workloads provided ample evidence of insufficient number of faculty members to effectively deliver programs. In most cases, ERTs were not convinced that the programs would be sustainable without substantial investment in additional qualified faculty. This justifies the decline in the mean scores of faculty sufficiency during the second cycle of accreditation.

Adequacy of Faculty Qualifications: ERT commentary pertaining to faculty qualifications in Reports on initial accreditation suggests that the requirement to have a terminal qualification in the discipline of instruction is well documented in institutional bylaws, except in a few cases. Faculty records and hiring plans reviewed by ERT’s during initial accreditation suggest that most institutions comply with the requirements of the Standards pertaining to faculty qualifications. Teaching at the graduate level in particular requires a terminal degree and a strong record of research and scholarly activity or significant professional experience. Although most faculty teaching graduate programs meet this expectation, it was noted that there was little time or support for research by faculty members. In IT programs the instructional hours in the laboratory are often taught by faculty with qualifications that do not meet the Standards. The Standards however, do permit teaching staff without terminal qualifications to assist in instruction, and to supervise certain additional sessions that support instruction; for example, they are permitted to supervise laboratory sessions that are provided to students as additional supporting activities and for demonstration purposes. Formal instruction (that which receives a credit weighting) requires faculty with appropriate preparation in terms of their qualifications.

Renewal of accreditation reports reveal that institutional policies are clear on eligibility of faculty to deliver graduate level programs and students’ theses are supervised by research-active faculty. The ERT considered the use of co-supervisors as good practice as it strengthens the

supervisory team and provides for development of supervisory capacity in the institution. It was also noted in one of the Reports that the list of publications of the faculty is impressive in light of the heavy teaching commitments they carry. In Health Science programs, those who provide clinical education are prepared at the master's level, have considerable experience. Faculty teaching IT programs do not seem to meet the Standards. ERTs found evidence from the materials submitted prior to and during the visit that some faculty members are teaching on the program without having terminal qualifications in the area. In other cases, where ERTs were satisfied in terms of terminal degrees and research experience of faculty members, it was found that several faculty members teach outside of their field of specialization.

Support Staff Qualifications and Sufficiency: ERT comments on Professional staff (non-teaching) qualifications, experience and sufficiency were regarded satisfactory in both initial as well as renewal of accreditation reviews. Staffing appears to be adequate to meet institutional needs in almost all of the reviewed programs. Staff members were found to be adequately qualified and possessed experience relevant to their positions. The comparative reading of ERT Reports shows evidence of sophistication of internal QA systems in UAE Universities. The Reports indicate significant self-review activities and evidence of quality improvement process during the second cycle of review. Systematic follow-up mechanisms through cyclic quality reviews of various academic processes seem to have been envisioned by institutions and ERT's have cautioned institutions through Requirements and Suggestions to ensure that the feedback loop was in place. However, in a few cases reviewed during renewal of accreditation, feedback loops between performance goals and actual performance were missing while in others, benchmarking at individual program level seemed superficial and lacked analysis. Program improvement process also failed to demonstrate the involvement of external stakeholders or their input in program development. A detailed review of the contents in ERT Reports is discussed below.

Program Monitoring and Program Improvement: All programs reviewed for initial accreditation suggests that a reasonably comprehensive set of QA policies and practices are in place showing institutional commitment to quality assurance and improvement. Ensuring that institutions are engaging in monitoring these policies were expectations of most ERT's as evidenced from initial accreditation reports. Initial accreditation proposals normally contain

procedures and processes for conducting institutional research and planned activities. Reports on initial accreditation therefore reflected the commentary of the ERT on how effective these policies are in meeting unit goals and performance objectives. A general notion that emerges from a comparative reading of initial accreditation reports is that if institutions implemented planned actions, it would prove effective in assessing and strengthening academic programs. The system for institutional effectiveness details various direct and indirect measures used by institutions. Student surveys, and surveys of alumni and employers- all indirect measures of assessment, are predominantly used in identifying areas of improvement. In a majority of the Reports, ERTs commended the comprehensiveness of arrangements in place for assessing program effectiveness. Programs in Health Sciences and IT invited the majority of Requirements from ERT's. It was noted in these reports that program assessment and improvement plans were not evident and it was not clear how attainment of program goals will be measured. Other Requirements emphasize the use of more direct measures to assess data specific to the program. ERT comments also suggested modifying proposed systems to keep track of changes made to provide evidence of closing the loop in the assessment of performance.

Renewal of accreditation reports indicate that ERT's found the monitoring process of a majority of institutions as exemplary in many ways. With the exception of two Reports in the IT cluster, the analysis suggests that there is a clear institutional commitment to continuous quality enhancement. The Institutional Effectiveness/ QA Manuals include an appropriate level of detail about how the IE continuous quality improvement process works. On the whole, the impression is of adequately-staffed institutional effectiveness and quality assurance functions with a comprehensive set of quality assurance policies and procedures in all institutions. There was evidence of data being collected, and direct and indirect measures of learning outcomes achievement applied at the course and program levels. The CAA Standards require demonstration of program effectiveness in order to achieve accreditation. At the time of initial accreditation most of the institutional effectiveness plans were a work-in-progress. ERT comments related to the existing arrangements or plans and the need to maintain an adequate balance between direct and indirect measures of effectiveness. In addition, the focus of the proposed systems which were predominantly at the institutional level rather than at the program level, called for a few requirements asking for change in relevant policies. A few renewal of accreditation reports highlighted several good examples of how institutional effectiveness

activities have benefitted its academic programs. However, a few also expressed ERT concerns about the evaluation of institutional effectiveness activities and how it has affected academic programs. In these examples, the use of external advisory boards in program review was stated in plans, but the ERT found little evidence that external stakeholders were involved in the process. This resulted in programs that lack external oversight and connection with the markets they serve. The ERT further noticed a lack of connection between the quality assurance function with faculty, and program and course management. In one case, a SWOT analysis was presented, but failed to demonstrate how results of routine program reviews were used to make improvements to the program and its constituent courses. The general impression that arises from the comparative reading of reports from both cycles of accreditation is that planned policies and practices have been largely implemented, and the results are slowly materializing. However, the actual impact of these QA processes will be much clearer during the next cycle of accreditation.

4.2.5 Summary of Findings – Phase I

An overall opinion emerging from the statistical analysis and close comparative reading of ERT reports is that external evaluation has significantly influenced program quality. ERT Reports identified good practices through commendations, and in many cases raised Requirements asking for change or provided Suggestions for improvement. There is a strong indication that institutions have taken ERT Requirements seriously and used it as a rationale to make improvements. In particular, significant efforts were taken to demonstrate achievement of program learning outcomes and mapping them to relevant level descriptors of the UAE qualifications framework. Other improvements related to the structure and content of courses, and actions taken by universities to achieve greater coherence in the sequencing and selection of prerequisites that make up the program. Based on accreditation requirements, assessment practices were modified to prepare students for higher order skills. However, issues such as inconsistency in markings, or poor student feedback, re-emerged during renewal of accreditation reviews. Advising and support services were found adequate and fully functional during both cycles of accreditation, except that most institutions failed to demonstrate how these services have been continually improved over the years.

Quality Assurance practices of institutions also mattered. Initial accreditation reports indicated sound plans for data collection and monitoring, and renewal of accreditation reports confirmed that institutions had implemented ERT Requirements. However, it was not clear from a comparative reading of the two cycles of ERT Reports that these activities have in fact evolved toward a continuous improvement model. Teaching quality was an area that showed no significant improvement between initial and renewal of accreditation reviews. Increase in faculty workloads associated with large class sizes and insufficiency of faculty were persistent issues highlighted in ERT Reports. Findings from Phase I of the study indicate that the positive changes would not have materialized without the impetus of external evaluation. The analysis also reveals key areas with particular recurring challenges– course delivery, management of course files, faculty workloads, sufficiency of faculty and their qualifications, relevance of the program to labor market requirements, and ensuring QA feedback loops to inform planning. These areas need to be closely monitored by the CAA.

4.3 Phase II – Analysis, Results, and Discussion

Research Question 2: Has accreditation had an impact at the academic unit level from the perspectives of faculty involved in the accreditation process? Are there any differences in faculty opinions according to the level of their involvement in the accreditation process or their academic disciplines?

In order to assess the impact of CAA Accreditation on Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness from the perspectives of faculty involved in the process, a web-based survey (surveymonkey.com) was administered. Only faculty members from the fifteen (15) sampled institutions of Phase I were invited to participate in the survey. A descriptive analysis of the survey follows.

4.3.1 Descriptive Statistics- Research Question 2

TABLE 16: PARTICIPATION IN FACULTY SURVEY

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	0.7
Agree	265	99.3
Total	267	100.0

From the 20 institutions that were invited to participate in the faculty survey, a total of 265 responses were recorded. Two (2) respondents disagreed to participate and exited the survey at an initial stage. Table 17 shows the frequency of respondents according to their academic disciplines.

TABLE 17: FREQUENCY OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

Category	Frequency	Percent
Business	42	15.8
Engineering	94	35.5
Health Sciences	84	31.7
Education	16	6.0
Information Technology	29	10.9
Total	265	100.0

Most respondents were faculty members teaching Engineering and Health Science programs. Faculty members from the Business, Information Technology and Education clusters represented a small number. It was important to know the level of involvement of faculty members in preparing for a CAA accreditation review to ensure that the statements in the questionnaire are well understood, and responses are unbiased. 71% of the respondents were either fully or partially involved in the accreditation process. 23% were indirectly involved in the process either by way of participating in meetings, surveys, or contributing to the preparation of the institution's self-study. Only 6% of the respondents were never involved in the accreditation activity.

TABLE 18: LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN PREPARING FOR A CAA ACCREDITATION REVIEW

Level of involvement in preparing for a CAA Accreditation review	Frequency	Percent
Not involved	17	6.4
Indirectly involved	61	23.0
Partially involved	111	41.9
Fully involved	76	28.7
Total	265	100.0

Faculty responses to Part B of the questionnaire were measured using a five-point Likert Scale for each impact index comprising of sub-scale statements. The total score for each sub-scale was calculated by adding all responses. Descriptive statistics of the data are presented Tables 19, 20, 21, and 22.

TABLE 19: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR PROGRAM DESIGN

Sub-scales for Program Design	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Has helped us articulate well-defined program and course learning outcomes	265	2	5	4.33	.629
Has helped align our degree programs to the UAE's National Qualifications Framework (QF Emirates)	265	2	5	4.34	.639
Has ensured that our programs meet a need in society, so our graduates have a smooth transition to the labor market	265	1	5	4.02	.828
Has ensured that our programs are structured in such a way that coherence is assured and that progression is made through the program	265	2	5	4.24	.622
Has ensured that our programs comply with the credit hour requirement for the appropriate level of qualification	265	1	5	4.32	.667
Has resulted in greater attention to usage of appropriate assessment methods of student learning	265	1	5	4.11	.799

Note: M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation. The ranges include minimum and maximum scores obtained from the data

For the sub-scale statements of Program Design most respondents identified the impact of CAA accreditation with a high level of agreement (Mean=4). The statement “has helped align our

degree programs to the UAE's National Qualifications Framework (QF*Emirates*)” showed a high mean value of 4.34 followed by “has helped us articulate well-defined program and course learning outcomes” with mean value of 4.33. The statement “has ensured that our programs comply with the credit hour requirement for the appropriate level of qualification” showed a mean value of 4.32, and the statement “has ensured that our programs meet a need in society” showed a mean value of 4.02.

TABLE 20: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Sub-scales for Program Management	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Has ensured that our programs adhere to essential entry requirements for student admission	265	1	5	4.07	.790
Has ensured that our learning environment facilitates a wide range of teaching approaches	265	2	5	4.11	.763
Has ensured that we use technology for more effective teaching and learning.(e.g., the use of LMS)	265	2	5	4.17	.689
Has ensured that our library is well-resourced and has a wide-range of print and electronic journals that meet current and future needs of the program	265	1	5	4.21	.774
Has brought about improvements in academic support services for students (academic advising, employment support)	265	1	5	4.03	.821
Has ensured that we maintain high quality documentary evidence of course files that are well-organized and complete	265	2	5	4.40	.639

Note: M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation. The ranges include minimum and maximum scores obtained from the data

For subscale items of Program Management, most respondents identified the impact of CAA accreditation with a high level of agreement (Mean=4). The statement “has ensured that we maintain high quality documentary evidence of course files that are well-organized and complete” showed a high mean value of 4.40 followed by “has ensured that our library is well-resourced and has a wide-range of print and electronic journals that meet current and future

needs of the program” with a mean value of 4.21. The statements “has ensured that we use technology for more effective teaching and learning” and “has brought about improvements in academic support services for students” recorded mean values of 4.17 and 4.03 respectively.

TABLE 21: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR TEACHING QUALITY

Sun-scales on Teaching Quality	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Has ensured that our faculty complement is adequate to run the program effectively	265	1	5	4.14	.738
Has resulted in increased teaching workload	265	1	5	3.32	1.118
Has ensured that faculty with the right credentials teach in our programs	265	1	5	4.00	.837
Has ensured that our faculty complement represents members with diverse educational foci and cultural backgrounds	265	1	5	3.88	.837
Affects the quality of teaching and of our programs just during the time of the on-site visits	265	1	5	2.94	1.268

Note: M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation. The ranges include minimum and maximum scores obtained from the data

For sub-scale items of Teaching Quality, responses did not show a consistent level of agreement. The statement “has ensured that our faculty complement is adequate to run the program effectively” showed a high mean value of 4.14 followed by “has ensured that faculty with the right credentials teach in our programs” with mean value of 4.00. The statement “has ensured that our faculty complement represents members with diverse educational foci and cultural backgrounds” recorded a mean value of 3.88, while the statement “affects the quality of teaching and of our programs just during the time of the on-site visits” showed a low mean value of 2.94.

TABLE 22: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Sub-scales for Program Effectiveness	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Has resulted in the setting up of Internal Quality Assurance mechanisms to monitor and improve the performance of various institutional units	265	1	5	4.16	.779
Has ensured that well-designed instruments are in place to collect stakeholder feedback	265	1	5	4.06	.731

Sub-scales for Program Effectiveness	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Has resulted in continuous evaluation of student support services (induction/ orientation, academic advising, counseling) for their contribution to the student learning experience.	265	1	5	4.07	.756
Has resulted in QA policies and practices existing on paper only	265	1	5	3.21	1.249
Has encouraged a culture of quality monitoring to ensure accountability and compliance to facilitate improvement	265	1	5	4.03	.778
Has ensured that our programs and services are benchmarked against best international practices	265	1	5	4.00	.814

Note: M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation. The ranges include minimum and maximum scores obtained from the data

For the subscale items of Program Effectiveness, most respondents identified the impact of CAA accreditation with a high level of agreement (Mean=4). The statement “has resulted in the setting up of Internal Quality Assurance mechanisms to monitor and improve the performance of various institutional units” recorded a high mean of 4.16 followed by “has resulted in continuous evaluation of student support services (induction/ orientation, academic advising, counseling) for their contribution to the student learning experience” with a mean value of 4.07. The statement “has ensured that well-designed instruments are in place to collect stakeholder feedback” recorded a mean value of 4.06, and the statement “has resulted in QA policies and practices existing on paper only” recorded a low mean score of 3.21.

4.3.2 Test of Normality- Research Question 2

The Researcher tested assumptions of normality using two standard tests- the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk Test prior to testing hypothesis. The scores for each of the four impact indices - Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness were found to be not normally distributed (for all factors, the p value < 0.05), as determined by Shapiro-Wilk’s Test (Table 23) warranting the use of nonparametric tests for further analysis.

TABLE 23: TESTS OF NORMALITY: FACULTY DATA

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	p-value	Statistic	df	p-value
Program Design	.137	265	.000	.937	265	.000
Program Management	.119	265	.000	.955	265	.000
Teaching Quality	.083	265	.000	.976	265	.000
Program Effectiveness	.140	265	.000	.966	265	.000

P>0.05

4.3.3 Inferential Analysis – Research Question 2

Has accreditation had an impact at the academic unit level from the perspectives of faculty involved in the accreditation process? Do faculty opinions vary based on the level of their involvement in the accreditation process? How do they perceive the positive and negative aspects of the impact of accreditation?

Null Hypothesis H₀7: There are no statistically significant differences in the perspectives of faculty who are fully involved, partially involved, indirectly involved, and not involved on the impact of accreditation on Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness

Alternative Hypothesis H₁7: There are statistically significant differences in the perspectives of faculty who are fully involved, partially involved, indirectly involved, and not involved on the impact of accreditation on Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness

The Kruskal-Wallis H test (also called the "one-way ANOVA on ranks") was conducted to determine if the perception of faculty on the impact of accreditation differed based on their involvement in the accreditation process. The Kruskal-Wallis is a nonparametric test that can compare unmatched groups. The test can be applied where a Likert Scale is used to measure responses. Kruskal-Wallis has an alpha of .05 with one degree of freedom. If the p value is small, then the researcher rejects the idea that the difference is due to random sampling and concludes that the populations have different distributions. If the p value is large, then the data does not give any reason to conclude that the distributions differ.

TABLE 24: DIFFERENCE IN MEAN FOR ALL IMPACT INDICES BASED ON FACULTY INVOLVEMENT

	Ranks			Chi-square	p-value
	Level of involvement in CAA Accreditation	N	Mean Rank		
Program Design	Not involved	17	82.50	12.970	0.000**
	Indirectly involved	61	103.85		
	Partially involved	111	146.46		
	Fully involved	76	148.03		
	Total	265			
Program Management	Not involved	17	90.44	12.671	0.005**
	Indirectly involved	61	113.52		
	Partially involved	111	143.21		
	Fully involved	76	143.24		
	Total	265			
Teaching Quality	Not involved	17	96.82	4.508	0.212
	Indirectly involved	61	130.61		
	Partially involved	111	138.26		
	Fully involved	76	135.34		
	Total	265			
Program Effectiveness	Not involved	17	102.06	9.305	0.025*
	Indirectly involved	61	114.93		
	Partially involved	111	145.32		
	Fully involved	76	136.43		
	Total	265			

****p<0.01, *p<0.05**

The Kruskal-Wallis H test shows statistically significant differences with a p-value of **0.000** for Program Design (Mean Rank of 148.03 for fully involved, 146.46 for partially involved, 103.85 for indirectly involved, and 82.50 for not involved), a p-value of **0.005** for Program Management (Mean Rank of 143.24 for fully involved, 143.21 for partially involved, 113.52 for indirectly involved, and 90.44 for not involved), and a p-value of **0.025** for Program Effectiveness (Mean rank of 138.78 for fully involved, 144.17 for partially involved, 112.51 for indirectly involved, and 107.74 for not involved). However, the p-value of Teaching Quality was **0.212**, suggesting that a significant difference was not observed for this index.

The results indicate that a p-value less than 0.05 for the three indices- Program Design, Program Management and Program Effectiveness show that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of these variables and the level of involvement of faculty in the accreditation process. For example, faculty members who are fully and partially involved recorded a high mean of 4.33 when compared to those indirectly involved and not involved in the process. For Program Management, Faculty who are fully involved and partially involved showed a high mean score of 4.25 and 4.24 compared to others with minimal involvement. Again, for Program Effectiveness, those partially involved and fully involved showed a high mean score of 3.99 and 3.98 when compared to the other two groups. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 for Teaching Quality, it can be interpreted that no significant differences exist in the mean Teaching Quality scores based on the level of involvement of faculty in the accreditation process. Therefore, the Null hypothesis “There are no statistically significant differences in the perceptions of faculty who are fully involved, partially involved, indirectly involved, and not involved on the impact of accreditation on Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness” is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

4.3.4 Faculty Interview – Research Question 2

The Researcher further indulged in gaining the opinion of faculty members on how they perceived the positive and negative impacts of accreditation as established by the survey results. The survey identified 63 faculty members who agreed to be contacted for further clarification. Requests for participation were emailed to 40 faculty members whose interpretations were expected to provide a deeper understanding of the results obtained through the statistical analysis. Eight (8) responses were received. According to Patton (2001), participant perceptions gathered through interviews serve as a rich and meaningful information base for qualitative studies. Email interviews were conducted as it allowed faculty more time to reflect and respond to the questions. Moreover, it was cost and time effective considering the busy schedule of faculty members. One drawback of email interviews is that it cannot detect body language or nonverbal language cues (Meho, 2006). However, this was not a major concern as the researcher was only seeking faculty opinions on specific results of the survey.

Email interviews were conducted following an 8-question protocol. The first three questions were on the respondent's role, duration of service at the institution, and general opinion on the value of CAA accreditation at the institutional and program level. Questions 4 to 8 were much focused and aimed to gather further insights on the results. Because the responses to follow-up interviews were maintained separately, the researcher did not connect individual responses on the survey with the follow-up interview. The table below presents the demographic profile of individuals who responded to the follow-up interview. Initials are used to maintain anonymity of participants.

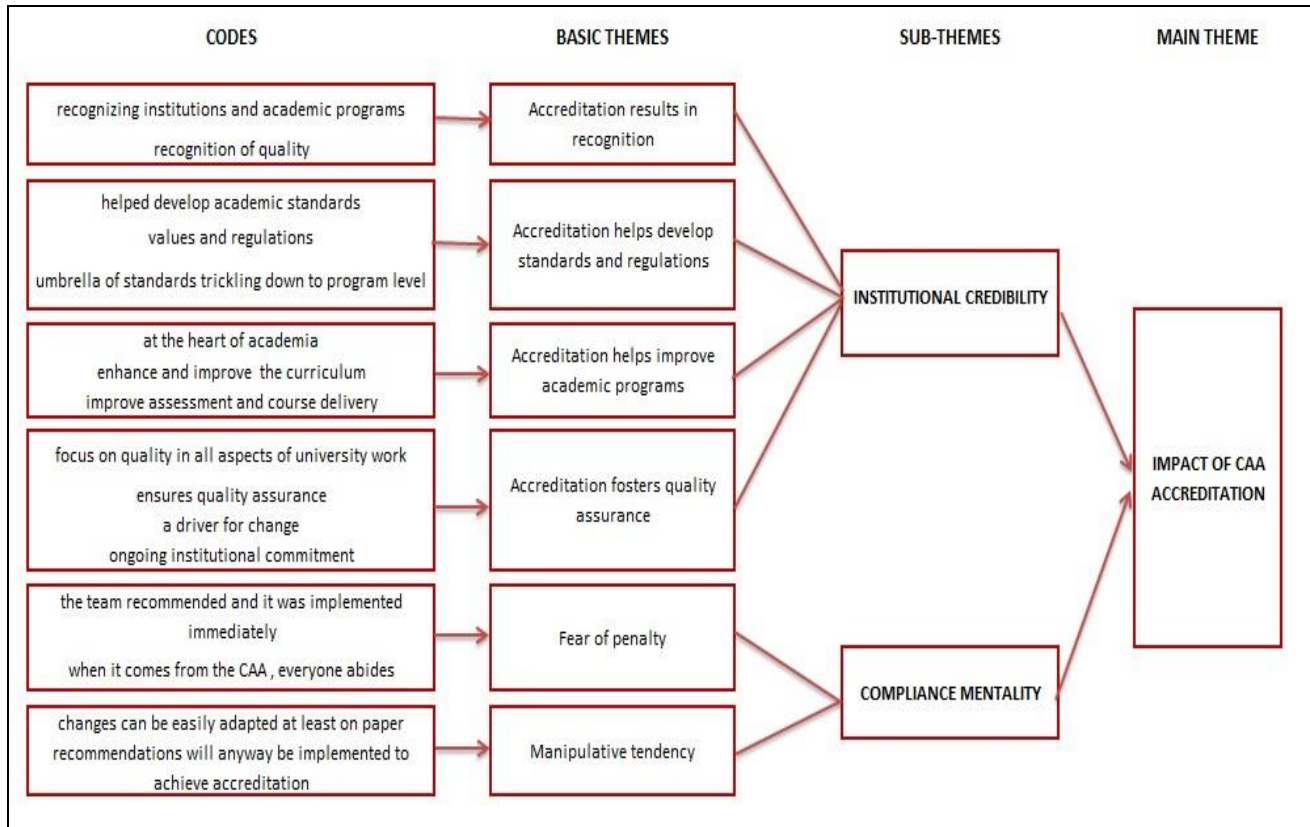
TABLE 25: PROFILE OF EMAIL INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Name	Position	Type of Institution	Years of Experience
AR	Associate Professor of Engineering	University	6
US	Dean of College of Business Administration	University	1 year and 4 months
HM	Professor and Dean- Health & Environmental Studies	University	4 years
RM	Professor- Health Sciences	University	Not mentioned
DP	Professor and Head of Department- Health Sciences	College	5 years
UD	Emeritus Professor of Finance - Business School	University	16 years in various key positions
AE	Department Chair at the College of Business Administration	University	2 years
HT	Director- College of Business	University	3 years

In analyzing the data from email interviews, a few themes emerged reflecting positive and negative effects of CAA accreditation on educational provision in the UAE. Quotes are included, but for reasons of confidentiality, each respondent is identified by randomly assigned initials. Figure 18 shows how coding of words and phrases culminated into sub-themes and finally the first main theme.

Theme One: Impact of CAA Accreditation

FIGURE 17: FROM CODES TO THEME 1



Institutional Credibility: All respondents except two, perceived increased institutional credibility as a result of pursuing CAA accreditation. Faculty firmly believed in external evaluations conducted by the CAA and found great value in them. Accreditation standards are identified as an important element in ensuring the quality of academic programs. In his response, DP stated “CAA accreditation plays an important role in recognizing institutions and its academic programs. It has helped develop academic standards and ensures quality assurance and quality control activities”. AE said “... at the institution level, it gives an umbrella of standards to follow which trickles down to the academic units/ program level, ensuring standards are met and progress is continuous”. HM said “CAA is the heart of academia for UAE institutions; without its values and regulations, the quality of education will decline”. US stated that CAA accreditation grants recognition of the quality of undergraduate and postgraduate courses and makes sure they are in line with best practice and educational policy objectives of the UAE. AR

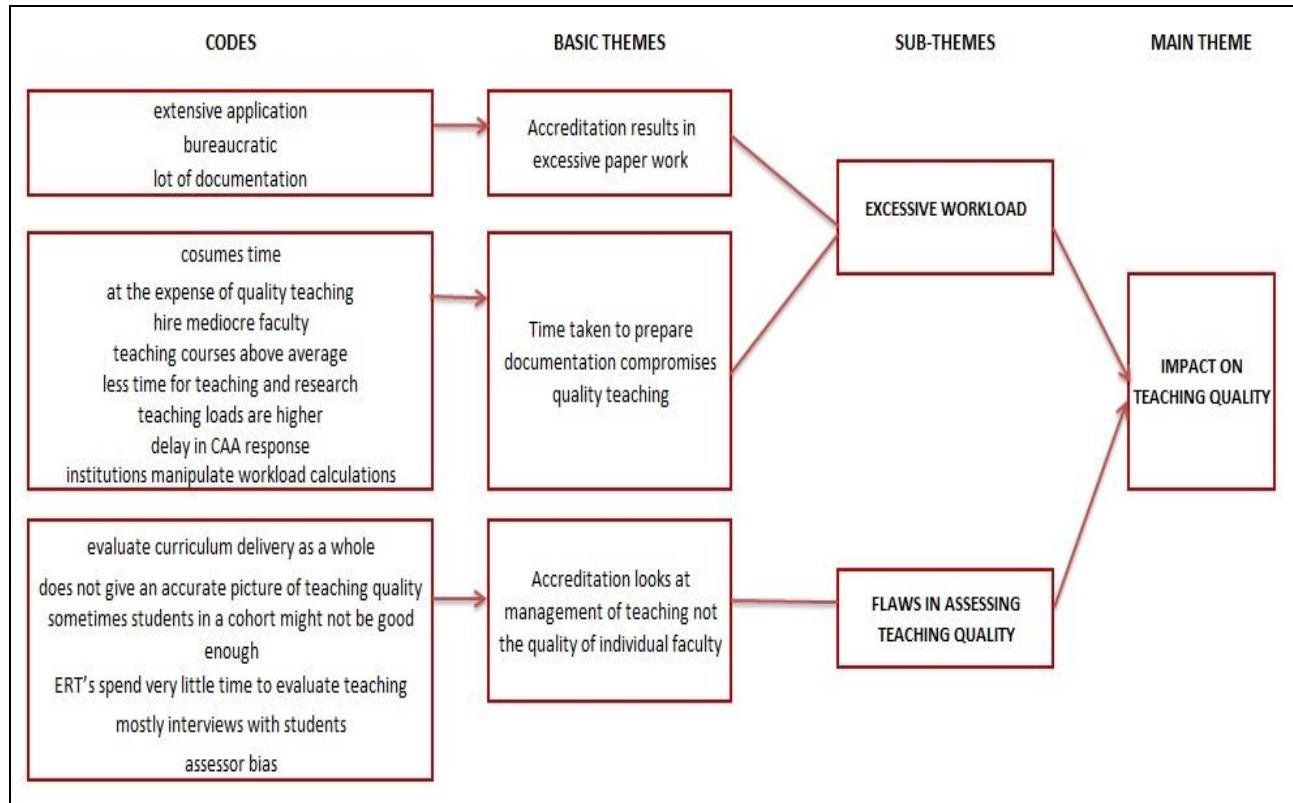
proclaimed that “at the institutional level, the value of CAA accreditation is to recruit more students in the program and to reflect a good image of the university; at the program level CAA accreditation helps us to enhance and improve the curriculum and syllabus, as well as continually improve assessment and course delivery”. UD asserted that his institution recognizes the value of CAA Accreditation both at the institution and at the program levels especially through the focus on quality in all aspects of university work, research, innovation and continuous improvement, engagement of stakeholders, and ethics and sustainability. The responses indicate that accreditation in the UAE is seen as a driver for change that enhances processes and fosters ongoing institutional commitment to quality educational provision. Institutions are clearly leveraging on advices provided by external review teams, or coercion in the form of requirements that must be adhered to, in order to demand more resources, to realign priorities and attain high standards.

Compliance Mentality: Several scholars have examined how higher education institutions have responded to the pressures of external quality assurance. Ewell (2010) and Dill (2010) state that evidence of positive impact have largely been indirect leading to a conclusion that there is no firm evidence on what has changed. Zemsky (2011) argues that the changes are largely symbolic due to the pressure imposed by accrediting agencies to report on various academic processes. From the interview data it appeared that the “compliance mentality” has worked in positive as well as negative directions. For example, on a positive note, DP states, “... the team recommended the use of multiple assessments, and it was implemented immediately. When it comes from the CAA, everyone in the College abides by it without any reluctance”. US however had a different perspective that the positive impact of accreditation on program design and program management is largely because certain elements of accreditation are what can be easily manipulated by the institution. He stated “because the exercise is heavily paper-based, these are what can be changed or easily adapted, on paper at least!” Although RM was not very explicit in his response, he thought that CAA Requirements for changes to program curriculum and their management will anyway be implemented to achieve accreditation; he said, “...that is the case with our university also”. RM was however not available for further clarification although attempted by the researcher.

Theme Two: Accreditation Impact on Teaching Quality

The statistical analysis of survey data established a negative relationship between accreditation and teaching quality. Respondents were asked about their views on this weak relationship. Two sub-themes emerged from the data obtained (Figure 19).

FIGURE 18: FROM CODES TO THEME 2



Excessive Workload: Not all impacts of accreditation are positive. One such perceived weakness of the system is the extensive documentation required from institutions as part of the Application. In discussing the challenges faced by South African Universities, Fourie and Alt (2000) argues that although external evaluation is directed toward an improvement-led culture, the concern was that academic staff became pre-occupied in building and conforming to quality assurance requirements diverting their attention from teaching and research. Faculty thought that administrative workload was extensive, time consuming and placed high demands on teaching and assessment of learning outcomes. AR said, "...Accreditation has a negative effect on teaching quality in that a lot of documentation and an extensive application required by the CAA

consumes a lot of time, sometimes at the expense of the preparation required for quality teaching”. US maintained, “CAA accreditation involves a lot of paper work- many that need to be internally checked, and then reviewed by the CAA review team, feedback, response and so on... It takes up a lot of time and need not be so bureaucratic”. DP stated, “...in a small college as ours, the documentation work required for accreditation has to be done by faculty themselves- this increases the work load. Moreover, the process itself is time-consuming; sometimes it is the delay in CAA response which prolongs the process”. The literature review purported that improvement in pedagogy is compromised by the apparent teaching overload of staff in higher education resulting in high levels of job stress (Edwards et al., 2009; Kinman, Jones and Kinman, 2006).

The situation gets worse with accreditation demands placed on faculty, and institutions manipulating workload calculations to their benefit. HM stated that “teaching load calculations are done by institutions in different ways considering cost-effectiveness. Sometimes it results in the instructor teaching many courses (above average) resulting in less time needed for quality teaching or research”. UD supported this view stating “I absolutely agree that faculty work-load is a key factor in ensuring quality teaching/learning. Faculty resources are weak in many cases; Institutions would not like to reduce the teaching load especially when the competition for student enrollment is severe”. He added, “Quality faculty are hard to find in the UAE especially with the CAA requirement of a maximum annual teaching load of 8 courses for undergraduate program, 6 courses for graduate programs which is very heavy compared to 3-5 courses per year in many internationally accredited institutions in the west. Faculty in the west focus more on research for ensuring effective learning and they would be likely to join an institution with such heavy loads dedicated to teaching. As a result, institutions take a risk in hiring mediocre faculty to handle undergraduate programs. This is perhaps a reason why many institutions in Dubai have resisted seeking CAA accreditation which is more stringent on faculty teaching loads”.

Flaws in Assessing Teaching Quality: According to Knight (2006), enhancement of teaching quality is a very complex job as it is not a formal process. He argues that enhancing teaching quality is practice-based, and implies a work environment that favors professional formation and hence requires a different way of thinking about its impact. Walhen (2004) argues that with increase in student numbers there is a need for a better understanding of skills related to teaching

and support of learning in order to maintain the quality of higher education provision. Quality evaluations generally focus on the management of teaching, without looking at the quality of individual faculty or how teaching happens in class. Cheng (2017) states that regulatory standards lead to “compliance professionalism” thereby reducing academics’ expertise towards classroom management and technical aspects of pedagogy.

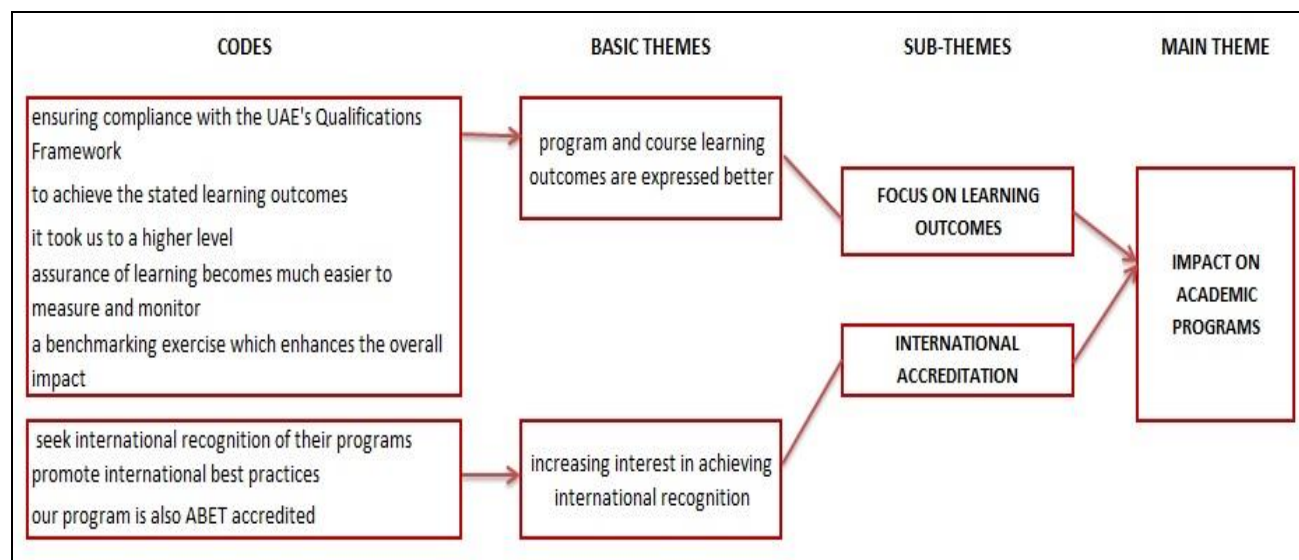
Admitting that it is practically unfeasible for the CAA to assess the quality of individual faculty, RM provides a different view on why teaching quality would have indicated a negative impact. He said, “External Review Teams of the CAA generally look into lecture notes, course portfolios, interview a few students and evaluate curriculum delivery as a whole. This does not give an accurate picture as to whether teaching quality is up to the mark... sometimes even if the teaching quality is good, the students in a particular cohort might not be good enough... all these factors can effect teaching quality”. US supported this statement “very little time is used to evaluate teaching in the class apart from interviews with students”. Although a peer-review process involving academic stakeholders increases the responsiveness of the program, it has been reported that panel members are far from consistent in their approach and judgment (Gerbic and Kranenburg, 2003). A similar view was expressed by DP who said “sometimes CAA assessors are either from the UK or USA and place different requirements according to the education system of their home countries. They need to understand the education system in the UAE and advise what is relevant for us”. The case of external evaluation with institutions and staff is always not straightforward. Academic freedom, and autonomy often come in the way of accountability and this is expressed in the form of administrative overload and undue interference.

Theme Three: Accreditation Impact on Academic Programs

Improvement in academic quality has implications on curriculum design and management of academic programs. According to Vazzana et al (2000) curriculum, non-academic functions, and academic administration are three main areas where quality improvement is generally noticeable. Despite the prevailing tensions between accountability and improvement, external evaluation is said to have impacted positively on program development. When faculty were asked about their

views on how CAA Accreditation has impacted curriculum design, course content and management of academic programs, two sub-themes emerged (Figure 19).

FIGURE 19: FROM CODES TO THEME 3



International Accreditation: An increasing interest in achieving international recognition of academic programs is emerging in UAE institutions. One of the most important benefits of international accreditation is global recognition which helps in international marketing of the program and consequently attracting more students. A study on the impact of three accrediting agencies on Taiwanese higher education institutions showed that international accreditation was preferred over local accreditation because it resulted in curriculum reforms, faculty efficiency, and better quality of education. (Hou et al, 2013). Data from interviews reveal that while faculty recognize and value the importance of international accreditation, they also acknowledge that local accreditation requirements have sharpened program curriculum development in their universities. For example, UD said, "...certainly, these developments and accomplishments on assessment and quality in CAA accredited institutions would not have been possible had it not been for the CAA thrust and focus through close monitoring during periodical review visits either for re-licensure or program accreditation. This is particularly important when institutions seek international accreditation of their programs either through AACSB/ ABET/ EQUIS which promote international best practices in ensuring systematic effective learning. CAA accreditation is important because it helps in continuous improvement of curriculum, keeping it relevant and

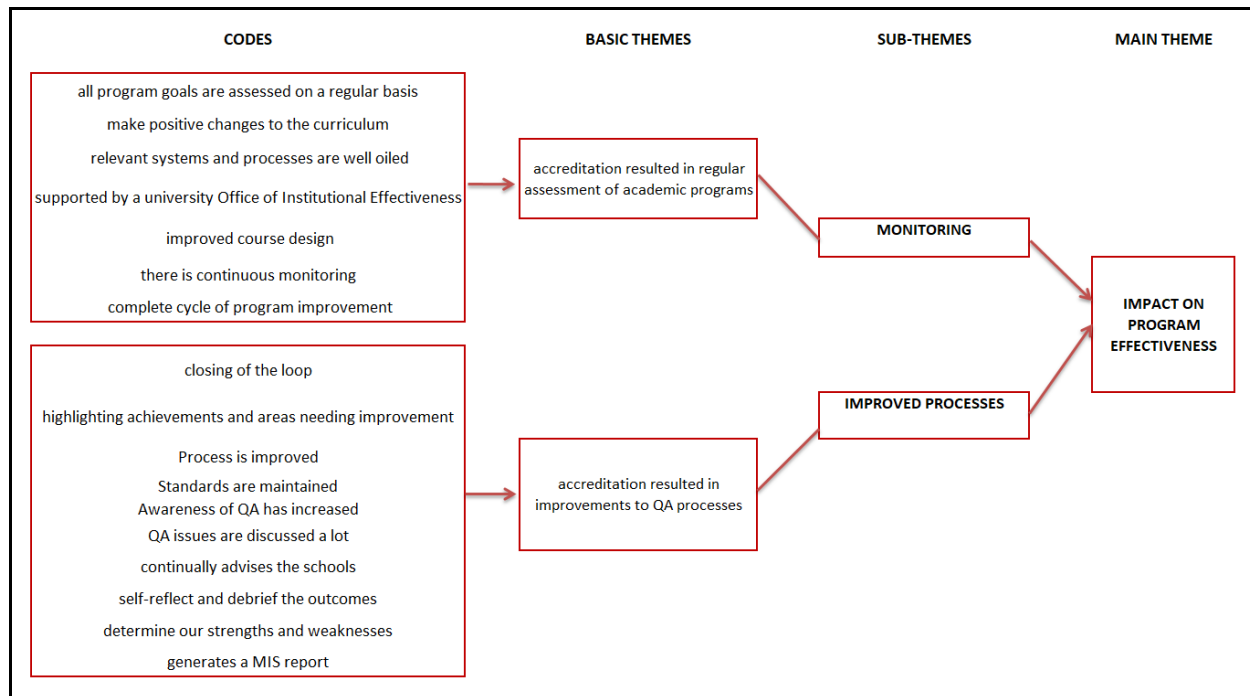
current, and aligned to industry needs.” While acknowledging the benefits of CAA accreditation, AR proudly stated “...our program is also ABET accredited”.

Focus on Learning Outcomes: Around the 1990’s quality assurance agencies in the US pushed academic institutions to assess student learning outcomes and ensure that students graduate with the needed skills and competencies to be productive in the job market (El-Khawas, 2014). Although assessment of student learning outcomes is a recent development in the UAE, its impact is beginning to surface. In a recent study, Abu-Garbieh, Salam, and Khan (2018) state that the application of QFEmirates benefitted their program in providing a frame of reference, international comparison of qualifications, and more importantly improving transparency of qualifications through a mapping of learning outcomes. The interview data suggests that the impetus for assessing learning outcomes has allowed for significant changes within academic departments. AR said “the CAA’s accreditation team reviews the validity of course learning outcomes and program learning outcomes in ensuring compliance with the UAE Qualifications Framework. This helps us prepare our graduates to achieve the stated learning outcomes”. DP believed that the focus on learning outcomes was introduced and streamlined in his college through the recommendations of CAA’s accreditation team. He stated, “...it took us to a higher level”. Considering the recent focus on student learning outcomes and assessment data required by the CAA for program accreditation, AE said, “...for sure, the assurance of learning becomes much easier to measure and monitor resulting in a benchmarking exercise which enhances the overall impact”.

Theme four (4): Impact on Program Effectiveness

Central to the core mission of accreditation is to foster ongoing institutional effectiveness activities directed at continual improvement and assessment. Faculty response to the survey indicated that accreditation has improved internal processes and continuous monitoring. From faculty responses to Questions 6, 7, and 8 two sub-themes emerged highlighting internal institutional changes as a result of accreditation (Figure 20).

FIGURE 20: FROM CODES TO THEME 4



Monitoring: Accreditation resulted in significant program changes owing to better decision making, and greater coherence of degree programs. US said, “...yes, as a result of accreditation there is better monitoring of programs and improved course design”. He further stated, “it helps us make positive changes to the curriculum”. AR supported this view stating, “Sure... a noticeable improvement is seen through the monitoring and evaluation process” He asserts, “We pursue a complete cycle of program monitoring based on student performances and achievement of student learning outcomes”. DP agrees that accreditation has resulted in increased monitoring of programs, introducing new courses, integrating courses, removing duplications, and introducing new assessment methods. He stated, “... there is continuous monitoring”.

Improved Processes: The external evaluation process of the CAA has reportedly challenged institutions to develop practices and skills for working through an evidence base. The Standards require institutions to collect “hard” data and use this information for program improvement. DP admits “...although workload has increased, the process is improved, standards are maintained, and more importantly awareness of quality assurance among staff has increased”. While it appeared that institutional data is systematically gathered, whether such data is used for program improvement was the objective of interview questions 6, 7, and 8. US stated affirmatively, “these

issues are discussed a lot- at virtually every college council”. Speaking of the usefulness of the institutional effectiveness process at her institution, HM said, “Program effectiveness is a very important parameter in program improvement ... in our University, the (IE) department continually advises the different schools at the University. Reiterating that a noticeable improvement in processes is seen through the monitoring of quality assurance practices, AR said, “...the results of various assessment are shared with faculty”. UD was very vocal on the importance of quality assurance and the process by which his institution engages in “closing the loop” ensuring that weaknesses found during accreditation reviews are used to make changes to programs. He said, “...this constant monitoring ensures that the relevant systems and processes are well oiled, constantly updated to reflect market dynamics, and ensures effective delivery of programs to achieve expected results”.

4.3.5 Discussion of Results –Research Question 2

The primary goal of accreditation is to improve program quality. The money, time, and resources institutions put into this activity justify an investigation on the actual impact of the process on the quality of educational provision. Data collected through a survey of 265 faculty members from 15 UAE institutions was used to statistically analyze faculty perspectives on the impact of accreditation on four identified areas of the curricular domain - Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness. A related question was if the perceptions of the impact varied depending on the involvement of faculty in the accreditation process. Inferential analysis showed a significant relationship between faculty perceptions of the impact of accreditation on Program Design, Program Management and Program Effectiveness. The analysis also indicated that accreditation did not have a significant impact on Teaching Quality.

The center of any discussion on academic quality depends on the extent to which faculty members accept the notion of quality assurance. Interview data affirms that faculty see a change in institutional practices evidenced by a growing commitment to academic quality through improved course design, evaluation of learning outcomes, and assessment moderation. Quality assurance is gaining acceptance in UAE Universities often portrayed through effective information flow, frequent meetings, quality reports, and engagement. Faculty acknowledge that

CAA accreditation has served as a framework in their pursuit to seek international and professional accreditation of programs. It has helped focus university attention to assessment of student learning, systematic evaluation of curricular effectiveness, academic services, and evidence-based quality assurance practices, which makes accreditation pursuits a lot simpler and easily achievable. The results of a study conducted by Seyfried and Pohlenz (2018) found that the attitude of institutions using the results of external evaluations was positively correlated with the perceived effectiveness of quality assurance among institutional members.

However, faculty referenced the least impact of CAA accreditation on teaching quality attributing it to the extensive documentation, resources, and time devoted to the accreditation process. They also claimed that their workload has increased considerably leaving little time for quality teaching or research. Adding to this issue is that excessive workloads create a negative impression of the institution making it difficult to attract qualified research-focused faculty. Sometimes institutions manipulate teaching load calculations to its benefit, attempting to make the process appear to be cost-effective. These results resonate with a recent study by Teelken (2018) which stated that while faculty appreciate the fact that quality assessments can ensure fairness, and transparency, they perceived a weak relationship between assessment and teaching quality citing their professional status as well as the immeasurability of their contribution to teaching. Three institutional contexts that can affect the behavior, values and beliefs of academic staff- the national accreditation system, the higher education institution, and academic professionalism. A study by Tavares, Sin and Amaral (2016) indicate that Portuguese academics feel that, the practical effects of quality assurance systems relate to increasing bureaucracy than to substantive improvements in teaching and learning. Accreditation is considered a labor-intensive process by most faculty- it involves developing program learning outcomes, mapping them to courses, creating rubrics for evaluation, collecting samples of student work, evaluating them, analyzing the data, making changes to curriculum and then repeating the process again to see the impact of those changes. The time and effort required for this activity is a challenge for faculty in the midst of their teaching and research commitments.

Overall, the interview data illuminate faculty perspectives on intended as well as unintended impacts of accreditation. It is obvious that CAA's accreditation process has had a positive effect on institutional and program quality as established by the results of this study. However, most

visible changes are associated with improvements in academic administration and technical aspects of pedagogy, which is a forced action resulting from accreditation. According to faculty, there is continuous monitoring of programs and increased awareness of QA activities through regular meetings resulting in substantial changes to curriculum. While faculty value the accreditation process as an opportunity to measure themselves against other institutions and international standards, it is evident that these changes have been the result of a culture of compliance that is bolted on to them by external pressure.

4.4 Phase III – Analysis, Results, and Discussion

Research Question 3: Has accreditation resulted in a culture of continuous improvement in UAE Universities?

“Quality Assurance” and “Continual Improvement” are two terms associated with institutional effectiveness. In addition to fundamental structures, policies and practices, institutional effectiveness activities are expected to assist in evidence-based decision making, so resources are utilized in the most effective manner. In keeping with the academic focus of this study, this research question will evaluate two aspects of quality assurance in UAE institutions:

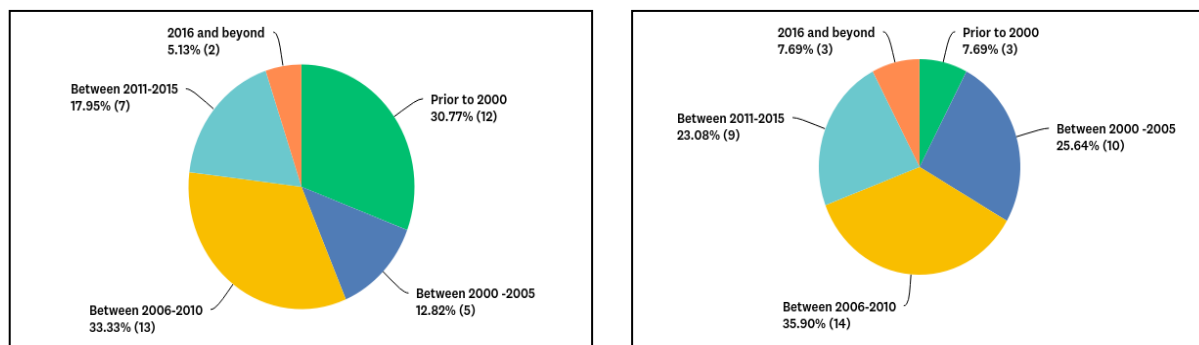
1. Evidence of a structural/managerial element with defined processes that assures and enhances quality
2. Evidence of a clear commitment of the institution in identifying and disseminating good practice through institutional effectiveness activities.

4.4.1 Descriptive Statistics – Research Question 3

A web based survey was conducted in order to capture the developments in quality assurance processes amongst Ministry licensed private higher education institutions in the UAE. Prior to the actual survey, a pilot study was conducted to collect feedback on the content and flow of the questions. The final questionnaire was modified based on the feedback received before the final survey was administered. An invitation to participate in the survey was emailed to 57 private higher education institutions in the UAE along with a link to access the web survey form. The survey targeted Quality Assurance/ Institutional Effectiveness Managers who are experienced in quality assurance activities and the CAA’s external review processes. Only one member from

each institution was invited to respond to the survey. The analysis that follows is based on the 39 responses received from the survey.

FIGURE 21 & 22: YR OF ESTABLISHMENT (INSTITUTION) / YR OF ESTABLISHMENT OF THE QA SYSTEM

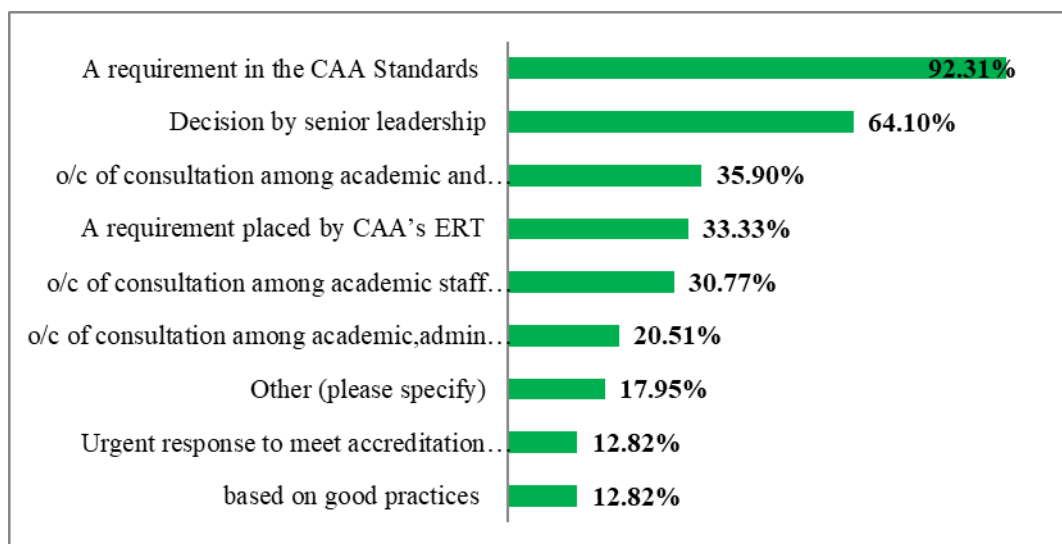


Of the 39 responses, 56.4% of the respondents were QA/ IE Directors of Institutions, 25.6% were IE coordinators, and 18% represented other categories. Three (3) institutions verbally communicated their difficulty in responding to the survey due to cumbersome internal approval procedures. In order to maintain confidentiality, institutional names or respondent names are not disclosed in the discussion. Among the 39 private higher education institutions that responded to the survey, 30.7% were established prior to year 2000 (before the establishment of the CAA), 12.8 % were established between 2000-2005, 33.3% were established between 2006-2010, 17.9% between 2011-2015, and the remaining 5.1% in 2016 and beyond (Figure 16) .The data in (figure 17) demonstrates that of the 30.7% of institutions that were established prior to 2000, only 7.7 % had established a quality assurance system of some kind. The data indicates that fundamental QA structures are in place at most institutions, but many (33.3%) established their internal quality assurance systems between 2006 and 2010. It is notable that during this time the CAA actively engaged UAE institutions in a number of Quality Assurance workshops and forums.

In terms of what factors influenced the introduction of a quality assurance system (figure 18), a majority (92.3%) stated that it was mandated by the CAA through its Standards for Licensure and Accreditation and is required for authorization of institutions and programs. A few (33.3 %) indicated that the QA system was established in response to a Requirement placed by the CAA's External Review Team. 64.1% of the respondents said that institutional leadership provided the

directions and resources to set-up the QA system; 35% stated that the concept of establishing a quality assurance system was an outcome of joint consultations between academic and administrative staff; and the remaining (17.9%) indicated that the driving force was a result of the institution's association with International QA Agencies such as SACSCOC, TEQSA etc., or its participation in Government initiatives such as the Dubai Quality Award.

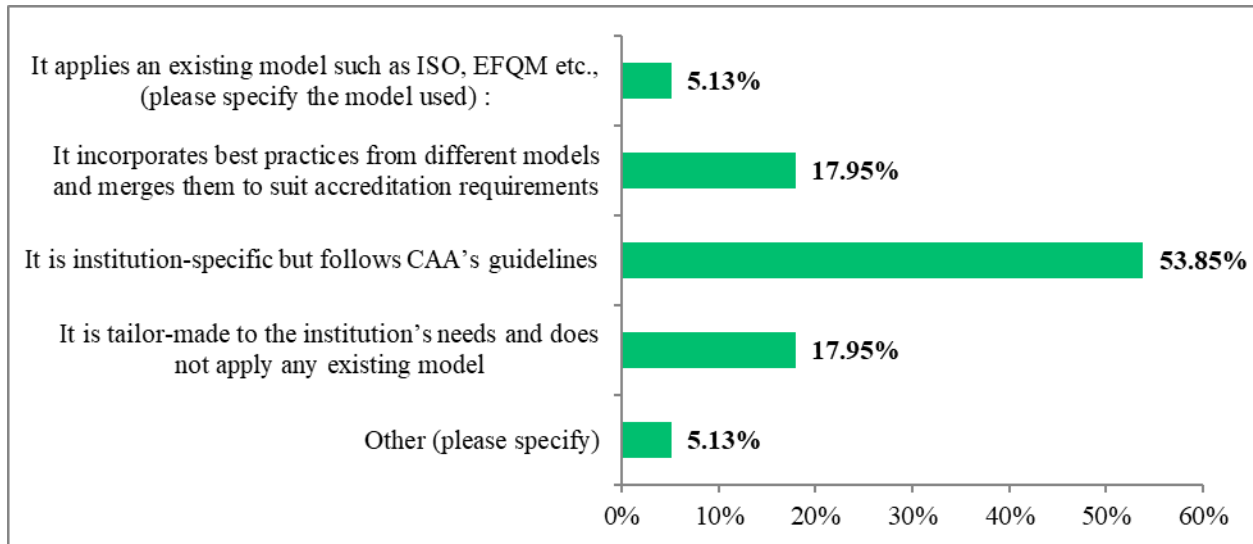
FIGURE 22: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THE ITRODUCTION OF A QA SYSTEM



National contexts have been decisive in the establishment of quality assurance systems world-wide. For example, Ntim (2014) stated that Ghanaian private universities have embedded a quality assurance culture as demanded by the national policy on Higher Education. A study of European Higher Education Institutions revealed that quality assurance systems were established mainly because of the requirements of national legal frameworks (EUA, 2010). Similarly, Anaam et al. (2009) credits the efforts of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) in the State of Yemen for establishing a quality assurance and accreditation system which resulted in increased awareness of quality standards, and quality assurance systems within higher education institutions. Data from the survey (figure 18) indicates that developments aimed at improving quality in UAE institutions has primarily stemmed from CAA mandates enforced through its Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. Leadership is judged as the next influential factor providing vitality to the functioning of higher education institutions. It is interesting to note that the results from a nation-wide survey of higher education institutions in Germany indicated that the support of institutional leadership is a crucial factor to the

effectiveness of a quality assurance system (Seyfried and Pohlenz, 2018). The study revealed that without the support of higher management, the chances of deliberating with faculty and other members of the institution would have been limited.

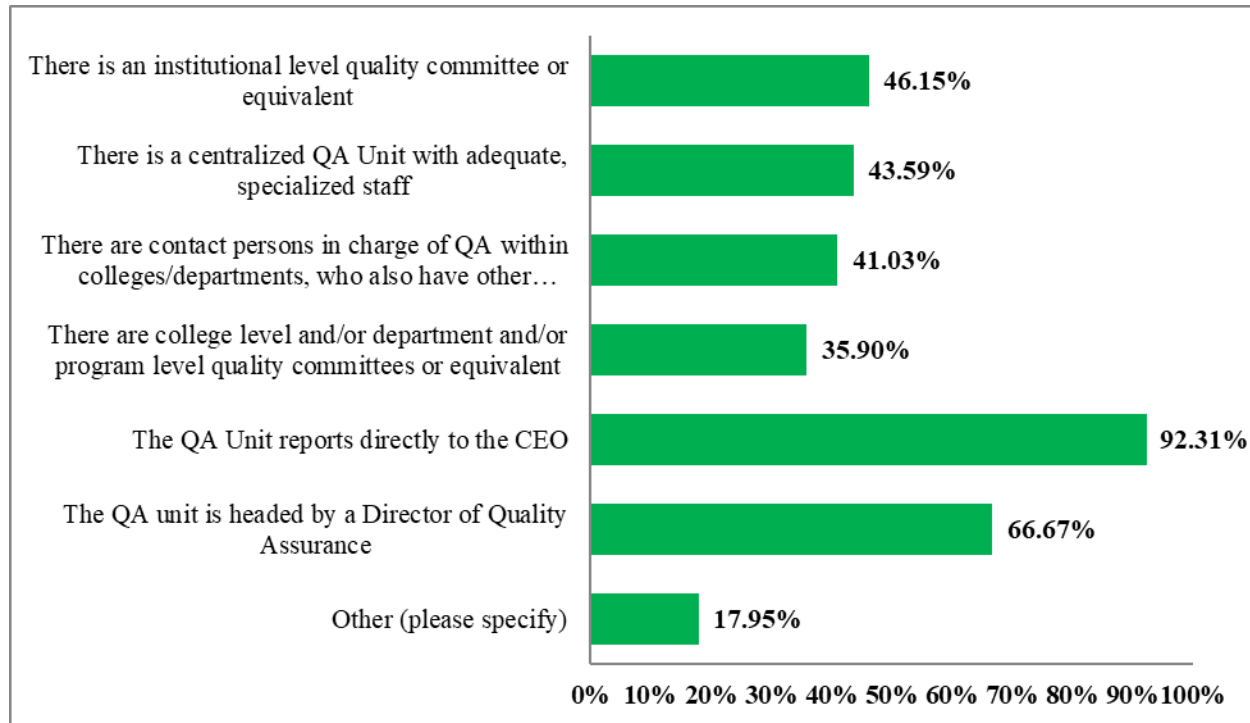
FIGURE 23: ARCHITECTURE OF THE QA MODEL



When asked about the architecture of the QA model (figure 19) implemented by institutions, more than half of the respondents (53.85%) said that it was tailor-made for the institution, but broadly follows CAA guidelines. 18 % said it was custom-made to the institutions needs and does not apply any existing model, while an equal number stated that good practices were taken from different models and infused into the current system to satisfy accreditation requirements. Only 5% of the respondents claimed to be using existing models such as ISO, EFQM etc.

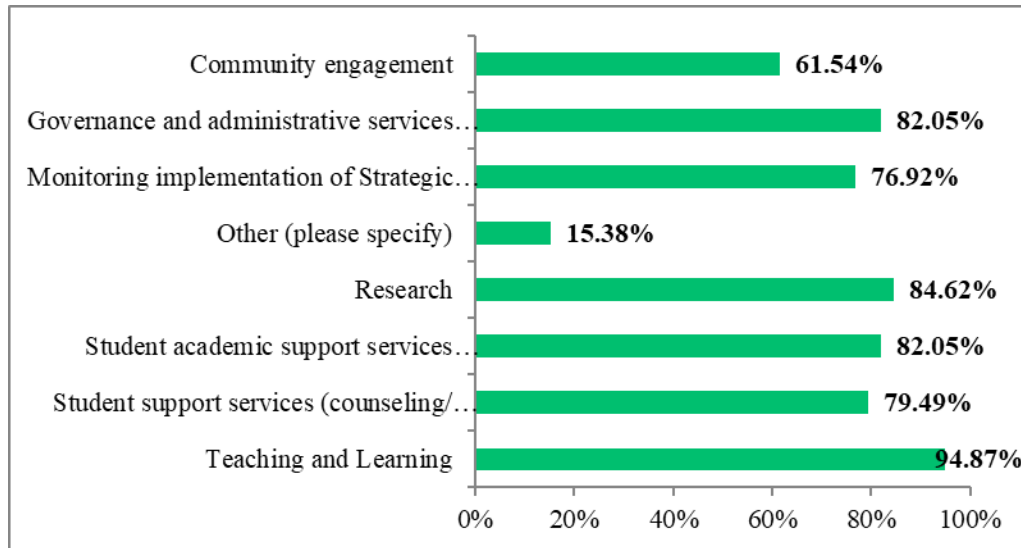
It is noteworthy that 92% of the respondents stated that the QA unit reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the institution. The CAA Standards (2.1.2) requires that "...the institution has a separate quality assurance/ institutional effectiveness unit reporting to the institution's Chief Executive Officer" (CAA Standards, 2011). More than one-sixth of the respondents (66.6%) stated that the QA unit is headed by a Director of Quality Assurance. Nearly half of the respondents (46.15%) have institutional level quality committees with 43.53% stating the presence of a centralized QA unit and adequate specialized staff to run its activities. However, only one-third have such committees at the faculty level. It appears that representation at the faculty level is through selected members who also have other responsibilities.

FIGURE 24: STRUCTURE SUPPORTING INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS



The survey revealed that a majority of QA activities relate to teaching and learning functions (94.8%). This is obvious as the very purpose of the CAA’s mission is to “promote educational excellence through licensure of universities and accreditation of individual programs” (CAA, 2011). One respondent stated “... the institution is actively engaged in the monitoring of program level outcome assessment in order to meet accreditation requirements”. Academic support services which is closely related to teaching and learning is covered in 82% of institutions. 79.4 % also offer administrative support services in areas such as health, counseling, internship, and employment. The concept of institutional effectiveness is also linked to the performance of institutions evaluated through the quantity and quality of its research outputs. It is notable that 84.6 % of respondents stated that their QA processes covered research activities. Community Engagement, a recent addition to the 2011 Standards, is regarded as an indicator of excellence and demonstrates how well institutions are integrated into their local systems and influence communities through knowledge transfer, applied research, curriculum development, and fostering values of citizenship.

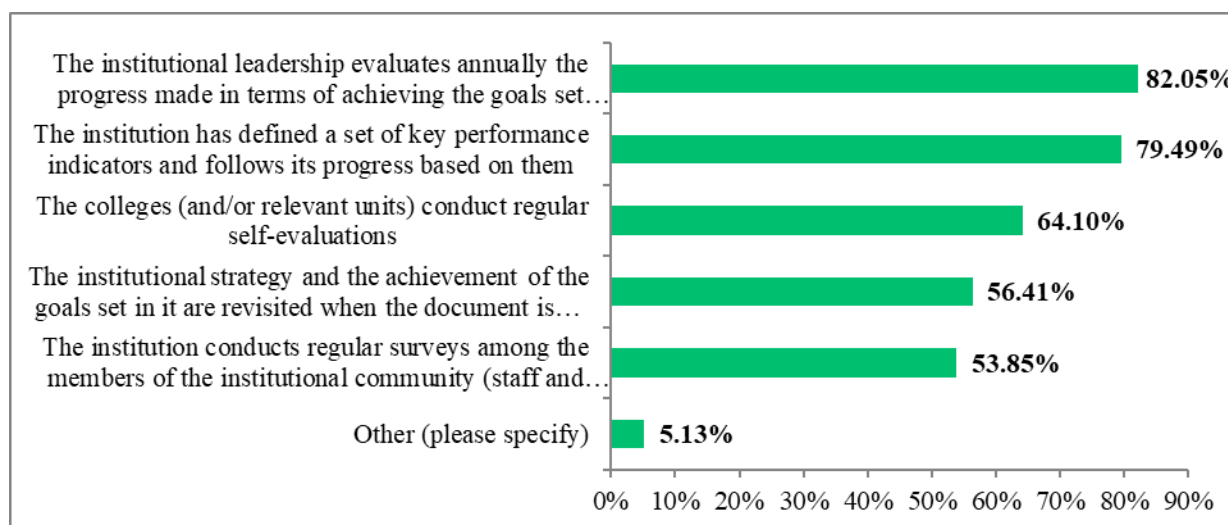
FIGURE 25: CORE ACTIVITIES COVERED BY INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS UNIT



Surprisingly, only 61.5 % stated that their QA functions involved support for community engagement. Governance and administrative services (82.5%), and monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan (76.9%) were rated high among key QA activities. According to Kettunen (2008), quality assurance overlaps strategic planning and hence information about the achievement of goals and KPIs must be taken into consideration for continuous improvement. He argues that in the absence of a common framework, evaluation of strategic management and quality assurance may be incompatible and thus compromise the success of the institution. In demonstrating an institution's commitment to its mission and vision, the CAA Standards require institutions to periodically evaluate the currency of its mission and vision statements and its usefulness in providing overall institutional direction (CAA, 2011). Strategic direction influences decisions on planning and allocation of resources. In terms of the availability of an institutional strategic plan, 94.87% of the respondents confirmed they had one. The manner in which feedback to strategic planning is ensured is through annual evaluations conducted against pre-set institutional goals (82%). It could be partly interpreted that the evaluations conducted are based on the results of internal surveys (53.8%) and self-evaluations conducted by academic units/ departments (64%). As confirmed by one of the respondents "...our activities cover strategic and operational tasks that relate to quality assurance and institutional effectiveness practices. The work of this division intersects with all units in the university and ensures that all quality assurance requirements are addressed". However, the

effectiveness of these processes could not be determined by the survey results. The pre-set goals used as a basis for evaluations are similar to Key Performance Indicators as explained by one of the survey respondents “...the institution is just now moving toward use of the term KPIs. That doesn't mean there was not an equivalent term that was being used. Expected outcomes and achievement targets reflect the definition of KPIs. These terms incorporate targets to be met and indicators of success”.

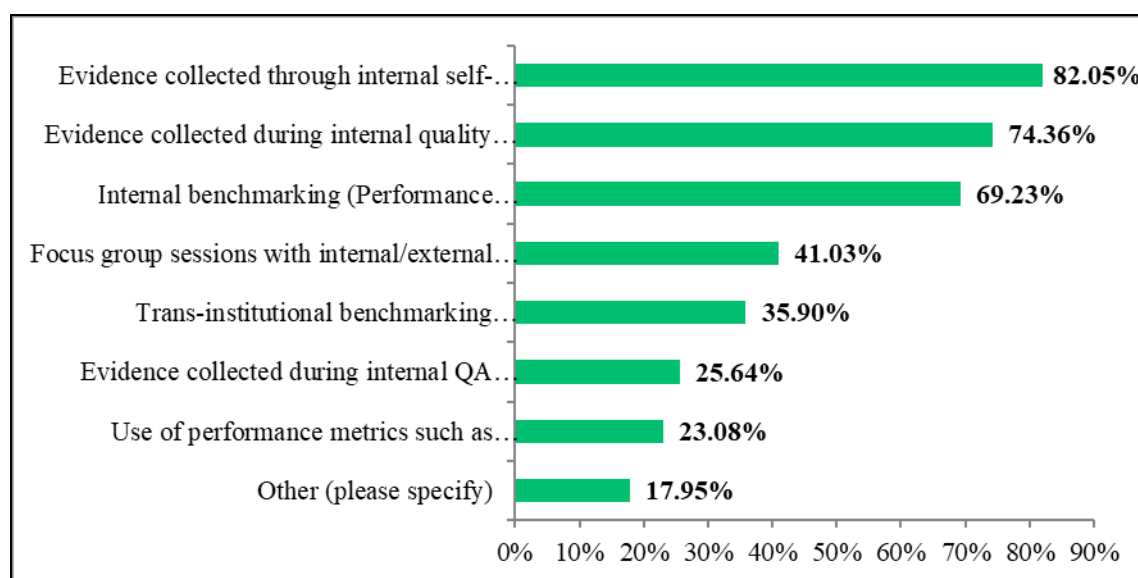
FIGURE 26: QA PROCESS: FEEDBACK TO STRATEGIC PLANNING



The CAA Standards (2.5) states “the institution maintains a Quality Assurance Manual that describes how all quality assurance activities are integrated into a single system to continually appraise and improve the institution”. It further states within Standard (2.1.3) “the institution has a process by which the QA Unit is regularly evaluated” (CAA Standards, 2011). The survey results indicated that all institutions have a comprehensive QA Manual, as required by the Standards. Of these, 92% of respondents confirmed that a process to evaluate its Quality Assurance system was practiced. In terms of involvement in the evaluation process, the QA department and senior leadership, or its appointed executive committees comprising individuals from academic and administrative departments, were named by a majority of the respondents. One respondent stated that its partner institution is involved in the process. Only a few responses indicated the involvement of all stakeholders including student representatives.

Evidences to evaluate the QA process is predominantly gathered through internal self-evaluative surveys (82%), and during internal quality checks (74.3%) conducted by the institution (figure 28). Benchmarking against own KPI's is done in at least 69.2% of the surveyed institutions. In terms of what the benchmarking exercise was expected to serve, 82% said it was done primarily to meet accreditation requirements.

FIGURE 27: PROCESSES TO GATHER EVIDENCE ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QA ACTIVITIES



This is substantiated by a requirement in the Standards (2.4.2) which mandate that “benchmarking is done against best local and international practices as part of continuous quality improvement process” (CAA, 2011). 76% of the respondents said that benchmarking data helped in strategic decision making, while only 69% found it useful to enable curricular changes. Benchmarking against peer institutions, and evidence from internal workshops and focus groups is generally conducted in a very limited way (figure 29).

FIGURE 28: UTILITY OF BENCHMARKING DATA

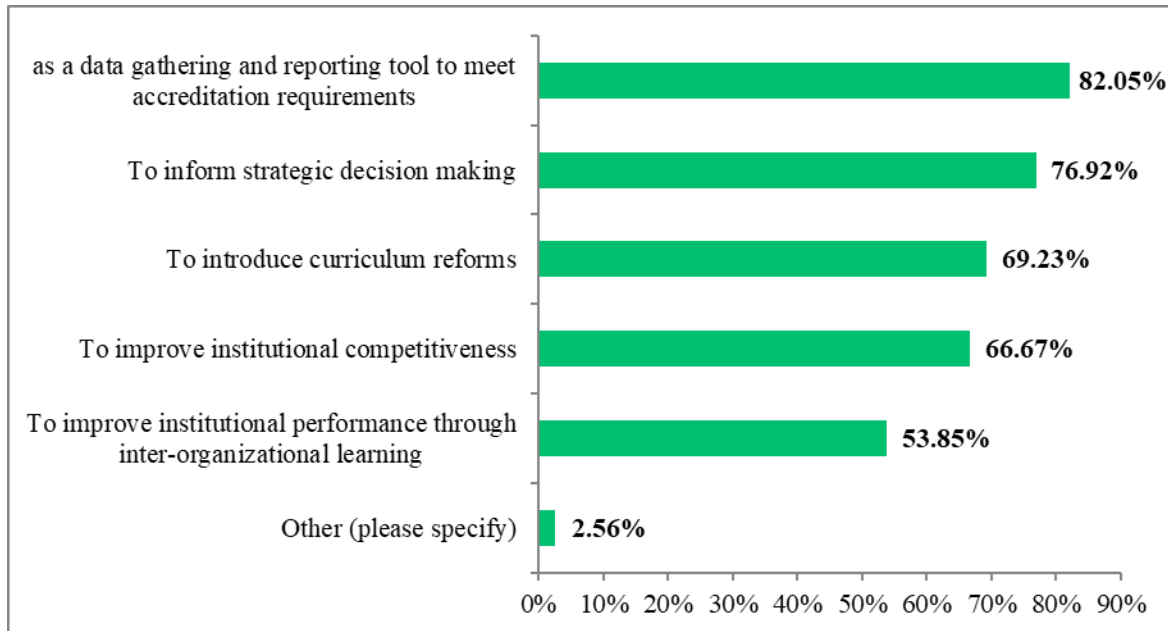
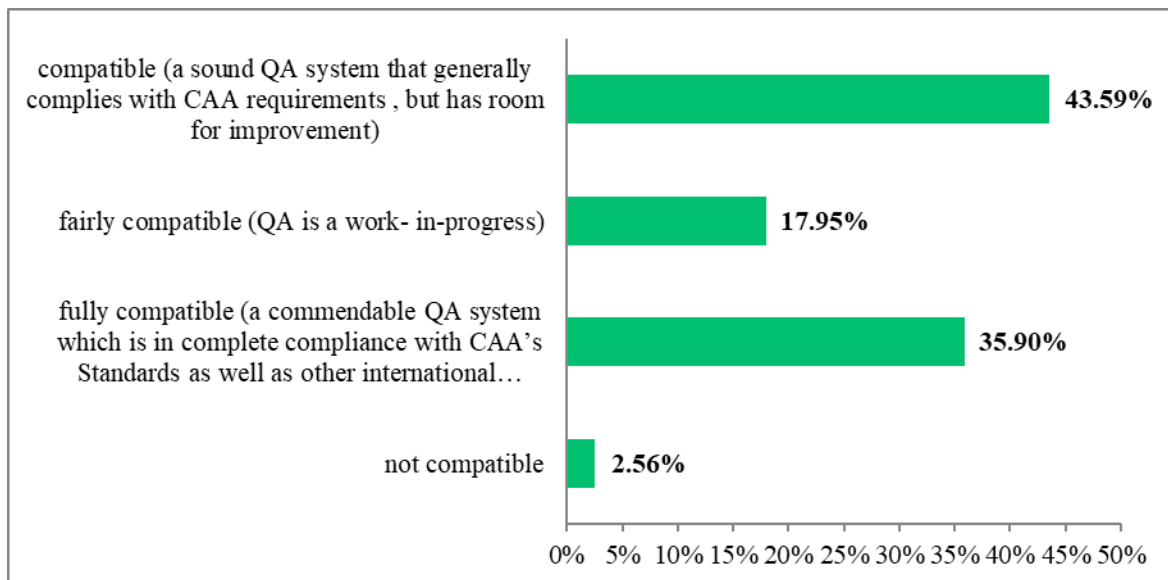


FIGURE 29: COMPATIBILITY OF THE QA SYSTEM WITH CAA REQUIREMENTS



On the compatibility of the institutional QA system with regard to external quality assurance requirements of the CAA (figure 30) , 35.9% claimed to have a fully compatible system which meets the CAA's Requirements as well as those of other international accrediting agencies. Less

than 50% reported they had a sound QA system in place, but with room for improvement. 17.9 % said that QA is a work-in-progress at the institution, and 2.5% thought it was not compatible with the Standards.

In keeping with the focus of the research question, Part B of the survey questionnaire comprised questions on monitoring and effectiveness of teaching and learning. In terms of involvement in curriculum design, 35.9% said that a working group or faculty committee designs the curriculum based on proposals prepared by others. 33.3% said that it is often a combination of strategies based on what works best in particular situations. As stated by one of the respondents, “...there is a process in place to satisfy CAA requirements with faculty being participants. However, sometimes there is a combination of strategies”. Only 5% said that services of external consultants are availed. Institutions offering programs of a vocational nature are seen to have active advisory boards represented by industrial representatives who are involved in developing and evaluating the curriculum. A respondent stated, “All programs are designed through the development of National Occupational Standards (NOS) with industry partners. An industrial committee is established to determine the particular knowledge, skills and competencies required which will then be translated into a qualification”.

FIGURE 30: DESIGNING PROGRAM CURRICULUM – THE PROCESS

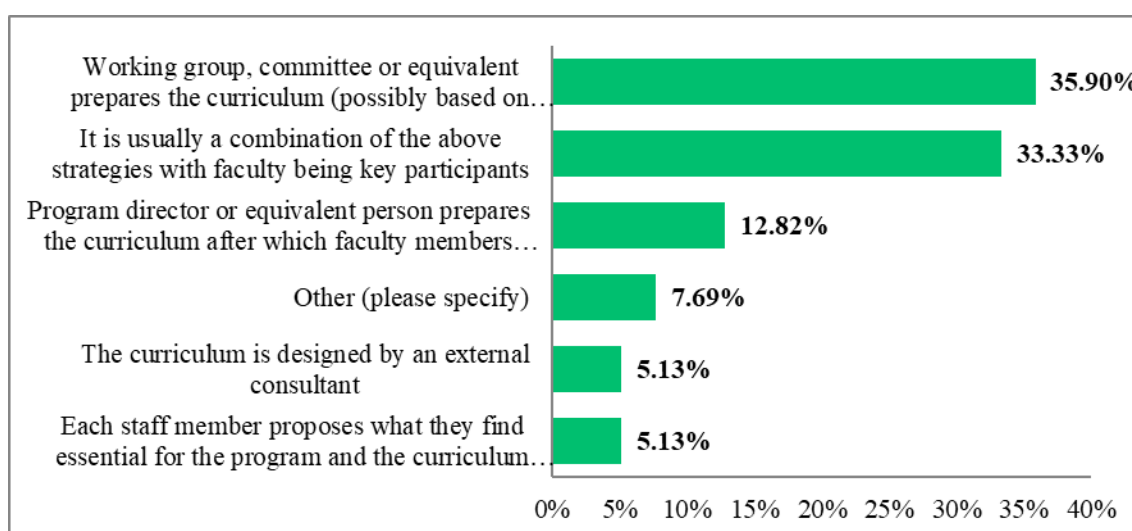
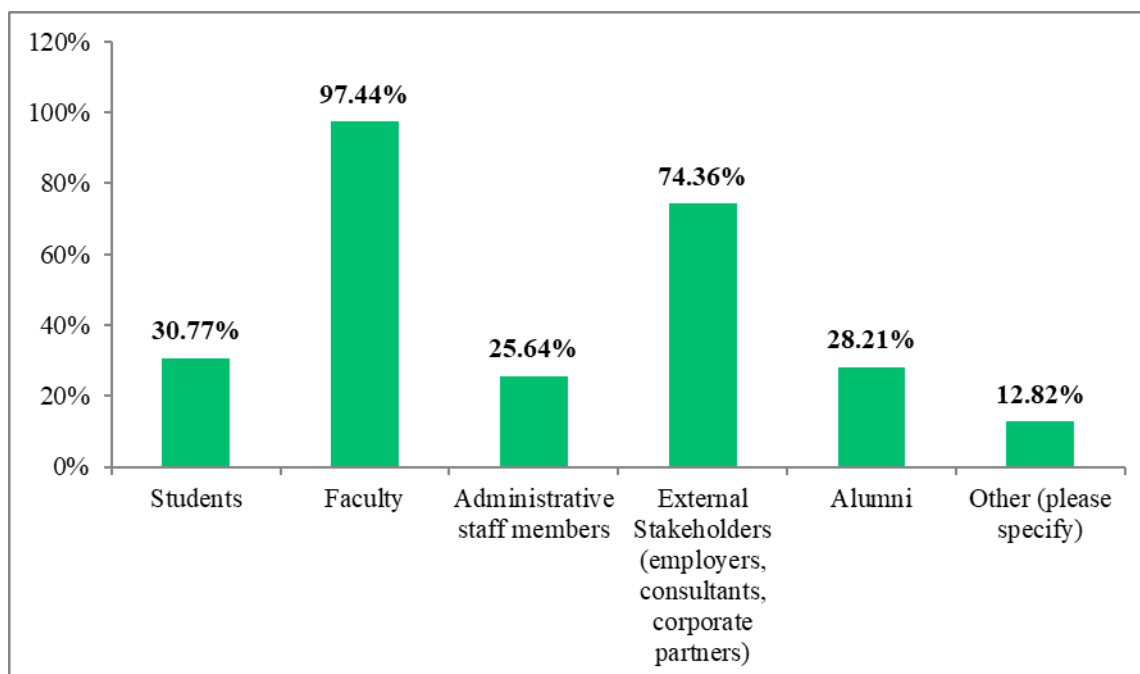


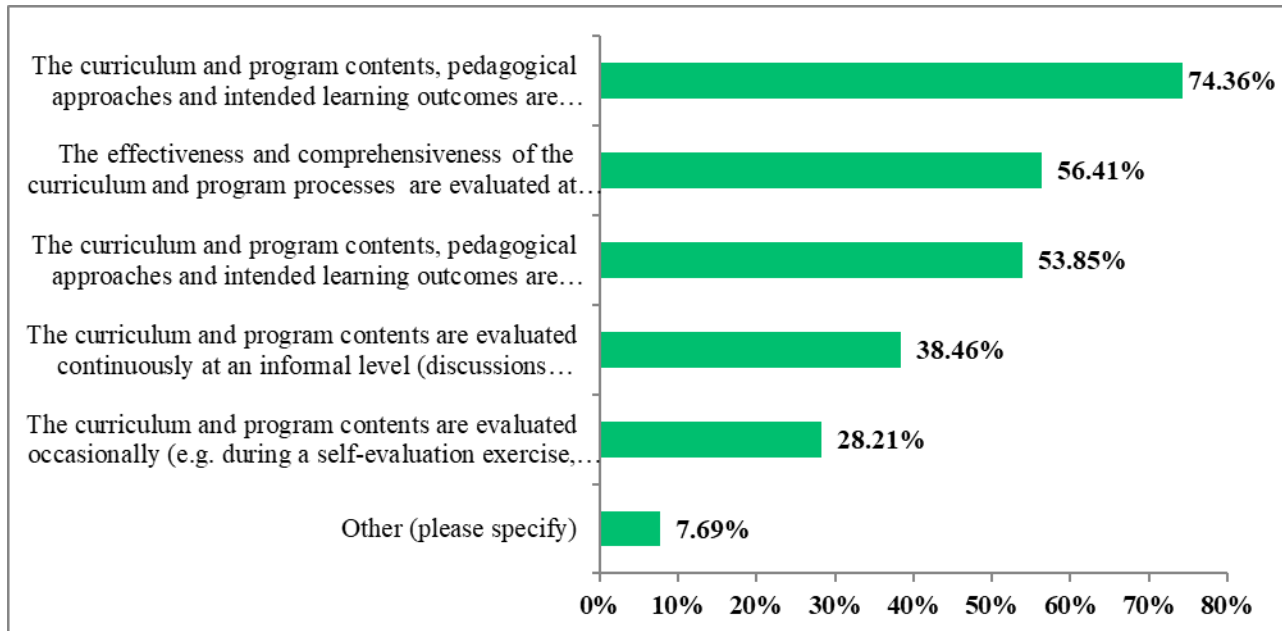
FIGURE 31: PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM



With regard to people involved in the development of the curriculum (figure 32), 97.4% stated faculty, 74% stated external stakeholders such as employers, consultants and corporate partners. Student involvement in curriculum development was 33.3%. However, as stated by a respondent, student involvement is mostly in the form of feedback through surveys.

Program monitoring and evaluation seem to vary from one institution to another (figure 33). 74.3% stated that program monitoring is done regularly through the IE/QA unit. A respondent stated, "...through the institutional effectiveness system, academic programs and outcomes are required to go through evaluations annually. Additionally, comprehensive program evaluation may be done on a cycle, using degree completion period- e.g. masters- 2 years; bachelors- 4 years and so on" More than half of the respondents also stated that evaluation is done on a regular cycle, and as part of an accreditation review. This gives an indication that program monitoring is generally conducted as a continuous process at UAE institutions and not done as part of an accreditation review alone.

FIGURE 32: EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS



As regards the instruments used in monitoring the effectiveness of programs (figure 34), 94.8% rely on student evaluations. 89.7% use surveys and 76.9 % make use of assessment data. In addition, annual reports of colleges and program operational plans provide useful information.

FIGURE 33: INSTRUMENTS USED IN GATHERING EVIDENCE OF PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

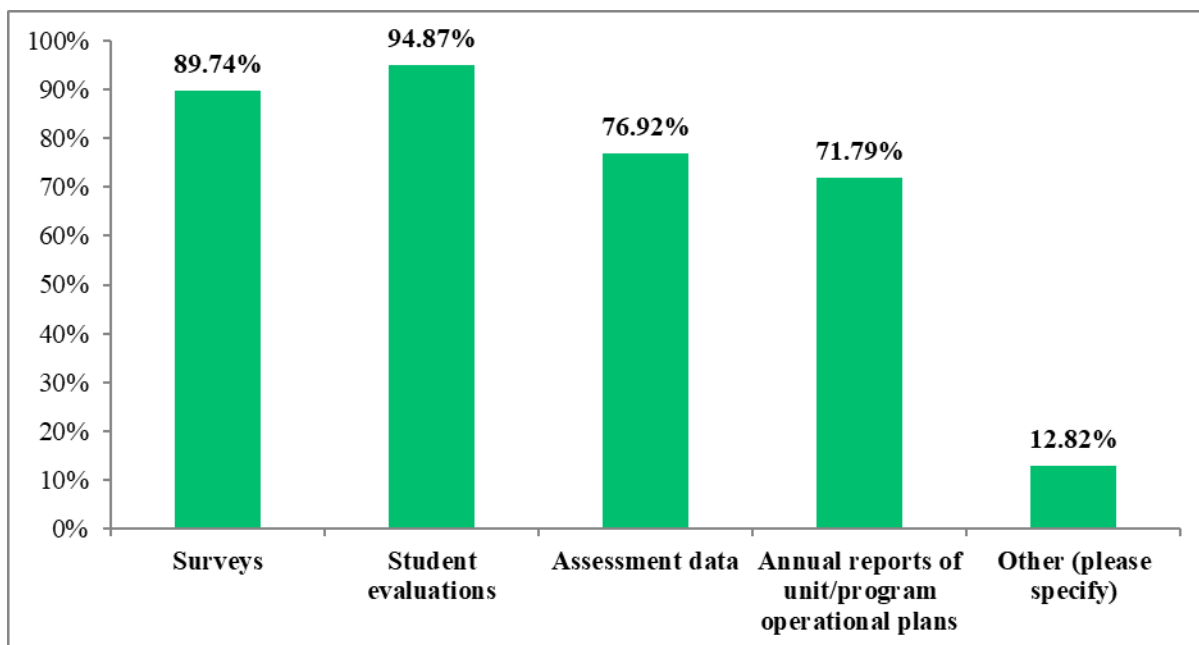
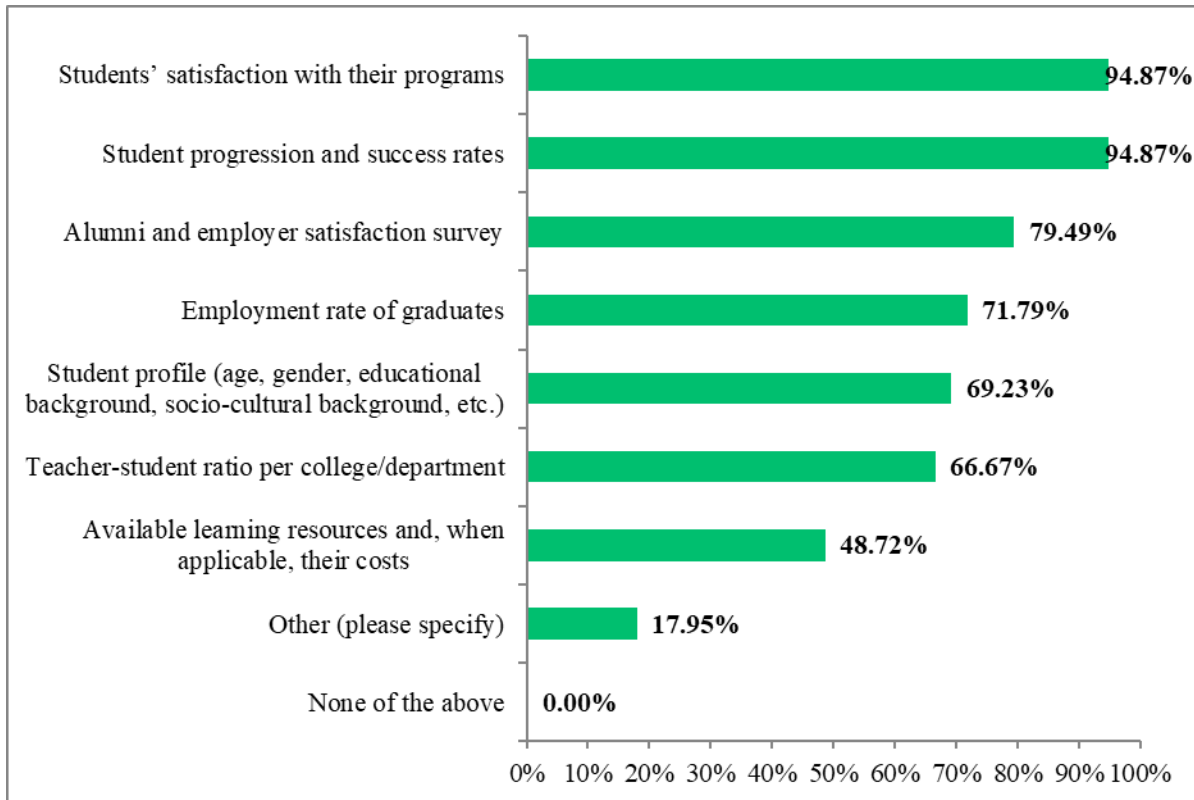


FIGURE 34: KINDS OF DATA GATHERED ON PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS



Student satisfaction surveys, student progression and success rates, and alumni and employer satisfaction surveys are the most common kinds of data collected to monitor program effectiveness (figure 35). In addition, data on employment rates, student profiles, faculty-student ratio, internships, and faculty and course evaluations are also gathered. 92.3% of respondents indicated that this data is analyzed for easy interpretation and use by relevant departments. The QA or Institutional Effectiveness Unit, and in some cases relevant colleges/departments analyze the data and share it with institutional leadership and relevant departments. When questioned about the extent of usage of the data for institutional planning and development, all (100%) stated that it was used primarily for the purpose of satisfying accreditation requirements. 94.4 % stated it was used to improve teaching and learning, and 88.8% said it helped improve student support services. One respondent said that in addition to the above, the data was used as a basis for staff promotions, and other professional activities. 74.36% stated that the institution engages in an ongoing self-reflective dialogue about continuous improvement of academic programs, and 25.6% thought this was not regular occurrence.

Survey response on CAA's monitoring role conveyed positive reactions. A senior official from one of the Universities said, "...I don't think external pressure is being exerted by the CAA. Standards need to be set, reviewed and the results used for improvement. This will help to improve the quality of education in UAE higher education institutions. You need an independent agency to conduct objective reviews to determine the extent to which institutions are embracing quality practices as there is usually a correlation between institutional performance and student success. It is a pity that some institutions do not see the merits of the Requirements of the CAA, embrace them and implement them for the sake of operating quality institutions and graduating quality students instead of just implementing them to respond to Accreditation Requirements". Another respondent said, "...we do not view the CAA's work as external pressure, but rather a support mechanism to improve institutional quality". Yet another stated "...it is normal to us to subscribe to such external pressure. We believe that doing so and subscribing to the Standards would mean achieving of goals and objectives of quality assurance practices towards leading to path of institutional excellence". Respondents generally perceived that the greatest positive impact of CAA's accreditation process has been on the quality of academic programs, and the development of internal quality assurance systems.

However, some negative comments pertained to having clearer guidelines "...there is no external pressure exerted but clearer guidelines would be more effective". Another respondent said, "...the standards follow a "one-size fits all" approach which is not customized to the type of institution being reviewed (niche institutions)". This was further elaborated by a respondent, "...yes, the pressure is excessive. We believe in a system where high quality institutions should be allowed more lenient or longer periods of valid accreditation. In addition, the CAA is too restrictive in terms of resource commitments required of universities".

4.4.2 Summary of Survey Findings:

Quality Assurance has slowly, but steadily become a part of higher education in the UAE. With the establishment of the CAA in 2000, quality assurance in higher education has undergone a major transformation contributing to the UAE's demand for quality education. The findings from the survey indicate that institutions have built QA structures, policies and practices, and this has been driven through the legal framework enforced through the CAA's external evaluation

process. The results also indicate that institutional leadership is formally involved in the QA process evidencing its support through allocation of necessary resources. One aspect that requires further research is the level of representation of college or program level quality committees in QA evaluations. The survey results do not clearly establish how active and influential the representation of academic staff is in QA evaluations. Again, survey results show that student representation in quality assurance is indirect, mostly through participation in opinion surveys.

The importance of follow-up activities and evidencing an institution's commitment to continuous quality assurance has been emphasized in the CAA Standards. Demonstration of the impact of QA activities is what transforms itself into building and sustaining an effective internal quality culture. The results of the survey indicate that a wide-range of data is collected, analyzed, interpreted and shared within institutional communities. There is also an indication of having used such data for improving teaching and learning, and services offered to students. However, all of surveyed institutions also indicate that CAA accreditation has been the prime driver in establishing a process of data collection and creation of feedback-loops to demonstrate how programs and services are being improved. Monitoring of strategic plans is a key activity of the QA system, and UAE institutions seem have established clear policies and practices to ensure that feedback obtained through annual evaluations, self-evaluations and internal surveys are used to inform strategic decision making.

However, whether these stated improvements in programs and services are monitored, and actual improvements are reported back to concerned departments/individuals could not be interpreted through the survey results. Thus it can be concluded that while QA structures, policies and practices exist in one way or another, the effectiveness of these quality assurance processes need a further qualitative examination that can establish the presence of a genuine quality culture that has led to improvements in university operations. The table below provides a mapping of the results of the survey to the relevant segments of the CAA's Standards.

TABLE 26: MAPPING SURVEY RESULTS TO CAA STANDARDS ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

CAA Standard- Institutional Research	
2.1.1	A well designed system of institutional research which provides the institution with the capability to determine whether the objectives of its academic, student, and administrative support units , and learning outcomes of its academic programs and courses are being met
Related Survey Questions	Findings
How did you introduce the QA system?	92.3% claimed it was based on a requirement in the CAA Standards. 33.3% said it was implemented to meet a Requirement placed by CAA's ERT.
How is your QA architecture designed?	53.8% said the QA system is institution-specific, but follows CAA's guidelines. 18% said it merged various good practice models to meet accreditation requirements. 17% said it is tailor-made to meet institutional requirements
Which activities are covered by your institutional quality assurance processes?	94.8% - activities related to teaching and learning; 82% - academic and administrative support services; 84.6% - Research activities; 61.5% - community engagement activities; 76.9% - monitoring of strategic plan; 8 2.5% - Governance and administrative services.
CAA Standard- Institutional Research	
2.1.2	A separate quality assurance unit reporting to the institution's Chief Executive Officer, which is responsible for implementing the system of institutional research, and is supported with sufficient human and fiscal resources
Related Survey Questions	Findings
What kind of structure do you have in place to support the Internal Quality Assurance processes at your institution?	92% stated that the QA unit reports to the CEO of the institution; 64.1% said that institutional leadership provided the directions and resources to set-up the system; 66.6% stated that the QA unit is headed by a Director of Quality Assurance; 46.15% have institutional level quality committees, 43.53% have a centralized QA unit and adequate specialized staff to run its activities. However, only 35.9% have such committees at the faculty level.
CAA Standard- Institutional Research	
2.1.3	A process by which the quality assurance unit is regularly evaluated
Related Survey Questions	Findings
Does your institution have a process to review the Quality Assurance system itself (manual, processes, and instruments)? If yes, who is involved in such review?	92% indicated that they had a process to evaluate the QA system. In terms of involvement in the evaluation process, the QA department and senior leadership or its appointed executive committees comprising individuals from academic and administrative departments were named; one respondent stated that its partner institution is involved in the process. Only a few responses indicated the involvement of all stakeholders including student representatives.
What activities does your institution engage in to gather evidence about the effectiveness of its quality assurance processes?	82% said that the QA process is evaluated through internal self-evaluative surveys; 74.3% conducted internal quality checks; and 69.2% conducted benchmarking against its own KPIs.

CAA Standard- Institutional Planning	
2.2.1	Develops , periodically reviews, and updates both short-term operational and long-term strategic plans
2.2.2	Documents its planning policies and processes
2.2.3	Ensures that the results of institutional research are used to guide planning, budgeting and resource allocation
2.2.4	Involves stakeholders, advisory panels and international practitioners in its planning, where appropriate
Related Survey Questions	Findings
Do you have an institutional strategic plan (or equivalent)? How does your internal evaluation process provide feedback to the strategic planning in place?	94.87% confirmed they had an institutional strategic plan with appropriate policies and processes; 76.9% said that monitoring of strategic plan is one of the core activities of the QA unit; 79% use benchmarking data to inform strategic decision making; 82% said that feedback to strategic planning is ensured is through annual evaluations conducted by institutional leadership against pre-set institutional goals; 53.8 % said that feedback is based on the results of internal surveys; 64% said it is based on self-evaluations conducted by academic units/ departments.
CAA Standard- Quality Assurance / Institutional Effectiveness Manual	
2.5	The institution maintains a Quality Assurance Manual that clearly describes how all quality assurance activities are integrated to a single system to continually appraise and improve the institution, its operations and programs
Related Survey Questions	Findings
Does your institution have a comprehensive Quality Assurance/Institutional Effectiveness Manual that describes the structure and functions of the QA processes in your institution?	100% reported having a QA Manual with appropriate policies and procedures
CAA Standard- Continuous Quality Enhancement	
2.4.1	The results of institutional effectiveness are used to modify and improve programs, resources, and services
Related Survey Questions	Findings
How often are program contents, pedagogical approaches, and learning outcomes evaluated? Choose all applicable options	74% said that the curriculum and program contents, pedagogical approaches and intended learning outcomes are evaluated on a regular basis through the IE/QA system; 56% said the curriculum and program processes are evaluated at a regular cycle (every “n” years according to degree completion period); 54% stated that evaluation is done as part of an external accreditation process
2.4.2	Benchmarking against best local and international practices is deployed as a part of the continuous improvement process
Related Survey Questions	Findings
Benchmarking in your institution is used for:	82% said it is used as a data gathering and reporting tool to meet accreditation requirements; 79% use benchmarking data to inform strategic decision making; 69% use benchmarking to aid curricular changes; 67% use it to demonstrate institutional competitiveness
2.4.3	Improvements are monitored and evaluated
Related Survey Questions	Findings

Is the data analyzed and interpreted for easy understanding by relevant departments?	92.3% said that data is analyzed and interpreted in a manner that is useful for relevant departments
Do you share the results of the data with senior management and/or concerned departments/ individuals?	100% stated that QA evaluation results are shared with senior management as well as concerned departments
To what extent does your institution use such data for planning?	100% stated that data was used primarily to satisfy accreditation requirements; 94% stated it was used to improve teaching and learning; 88% stated it was used to improve services provided to students
Does your institution engage in an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about continuous improvement of academic programs, student learning, and institutional processes with relevant stakeholders?	74% stated that there is change in the quality culture of the institution characterized by an ongoing, self-reflective dialogue on continuous improvement

4.4.3 Interviews- Research Question 3

Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with nine (9) Heads of QA departments from the sample that responded to the survey questionnaire. All nine interviews were telephone based although only two individuals consented to be audio taped. Interviews lasted between 20-25 minutes. In certain instances, the researcher's request for examples and documents were emailed to her after the interviews took place. The roles of the interviewees and type of institutions they represent are tabulated below.

TABLE 27: QA INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Name	Position	Type of Institution	Years of Experience
BU	Head of Institutional Effectiveness	University	12
SS	Head of Institutional Effectiveness	College	12
FC	Head of Quality Assurance and Institutional Research	University	12
MC	Head of Institutional Effectiveness	College	18
MP	Director of Accreditation	University	9
AA	Director of Institutional Research	University	16.5

Name	Position	Type of Institution	Years of Experience
	and Analysis		
JP	Manager of Institutional Effectiveness	University	14
SG	Institutional Effectiveness Specialist	College	12
AJ	Senior Accreditation Officer	University	9

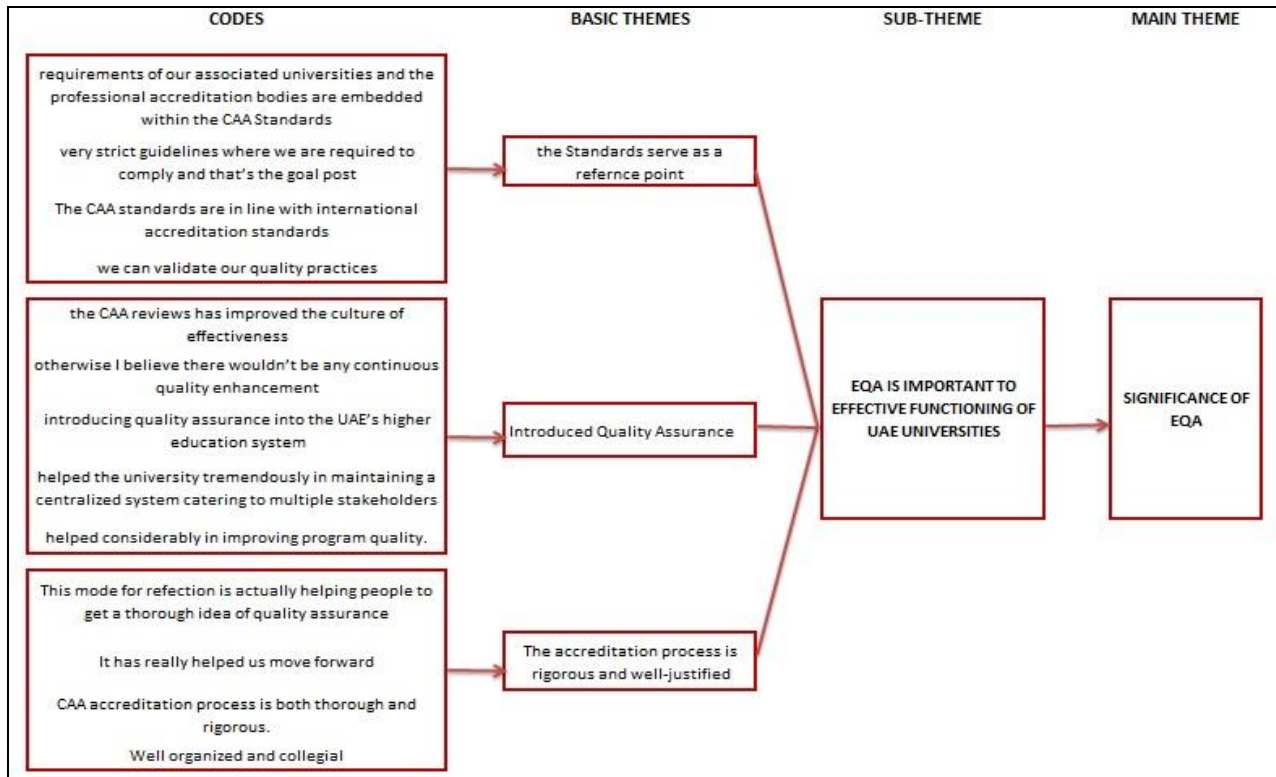
Each interview was transcribed by the researcher and transcripts emailed to interviewees for review and consent. Manual coding was done on an excel sheet and interpretation of the data was developed through discussions with an Expert at the CAA around patterns and themes that emerged. Respondent quotes included in the discussion are drawn from interview transcripts. The interviews were primarily conducted to find if an internal quality culture or a culture of evidence was present in UAE institutions. It is believed that establishing robust policies and structures, involving institutional members to actively contribute, and optimal utilization of data to improve resources is likely to enhance the accreditation process. According to Procopio (2010), the presence of six factors confirms the presence of a culture of quality in the literature surrounding accreditation in higher education: team work, relationship with institutional members, information flow, involvement, effective meetings, and effective supervision. The European University Association (EUA) defines quality culture as “an organizational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently and is characterized by two distinct elements: on one hand, a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality and, on the other hand, a structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual efforts. (EUA 2006:10). The researcher looked for evidences of these elements as well as others themes that emerged from the interview data.

Theme (1) One - Significance of EQA:

The CAA’s Standards for Licensure and Accreditation provides a framework of quality assurance for UAE Universities. It guides institutions to monitor their own standards and reflect and indicate their progress through licensure and accreditation reviews conducted by the

authority. The interview data revealed that UAE institutions had an optimistic view of the CAA’s external evaluation process (Figure 36).

FIGURE 35: FROM CODES TO THEME 1 (QUALITY CULTURE)



For some respondents, it provided a framework to establish a centralized quality assurance system. For example, BU stated “most of the requirements of our associated universities and professional accreditation bodies are embedded within the CAA Standards which has helped the university tremendously in maintaining a centralized system catering to multiple stakeholders”. SS supported the view and said, “...there are very strict guidelines to comply and that’s the goal post. It has really helped us move forward”. FC thought accreditation was a significant activity for his institution to validate current quality practices based on feedback received from External Review Teams.

For MP, accreditation was a very valuable and positive experience. Not only did it help his institution measure themselves against the quality criteria set by the CAA, but also ensured that they are consistent with international standards. He said, “...xxx has achieved various international accreditations and we continue to meet high standards in quality assurance. There

have been several occasions wherein significant improvement in the quality of programs has occurred because of the CAA reviewers and their feedback and recommendations”. JP who has been working in the area of Quality Assurance for over fourteen years, recollects major changes she has seen in the higher education sector of the UAE. She said, “...effectiveness had been low priority prior to the establishment of the CAA. People didn’t have the opportunity to reflect as they are now forced to do with the CAA. This mode for reflection is *actually helping* people to get a thorough idea of quality assurance”. SG thought that CAA’s oversight on institutional activity is justifiable considering that the higher education sector in the country is relatively young. Data from interviews suggest that external evaluation has resulted in transparency of operations and clearer documentation of institutional activities. Changes have occurred over time and these are attributed to recommendations and Requirements for improvements provided by accreditation teams.

Theme (2) Two - Culture of Compliance

A compliance mentality can prove damaging if quality evaluations are related to the agenda of the government or accreditation agency rather than the institution or department itself. Sometimes institutional members acknowledge the necessity of conducting evaluations, but do not view it as a process that will enhance their professional practice. This can result in program evaluations becoming too ritualistic and not adding any value to the institution. A few comments from the interview data do point towards this direction (Figure 37).

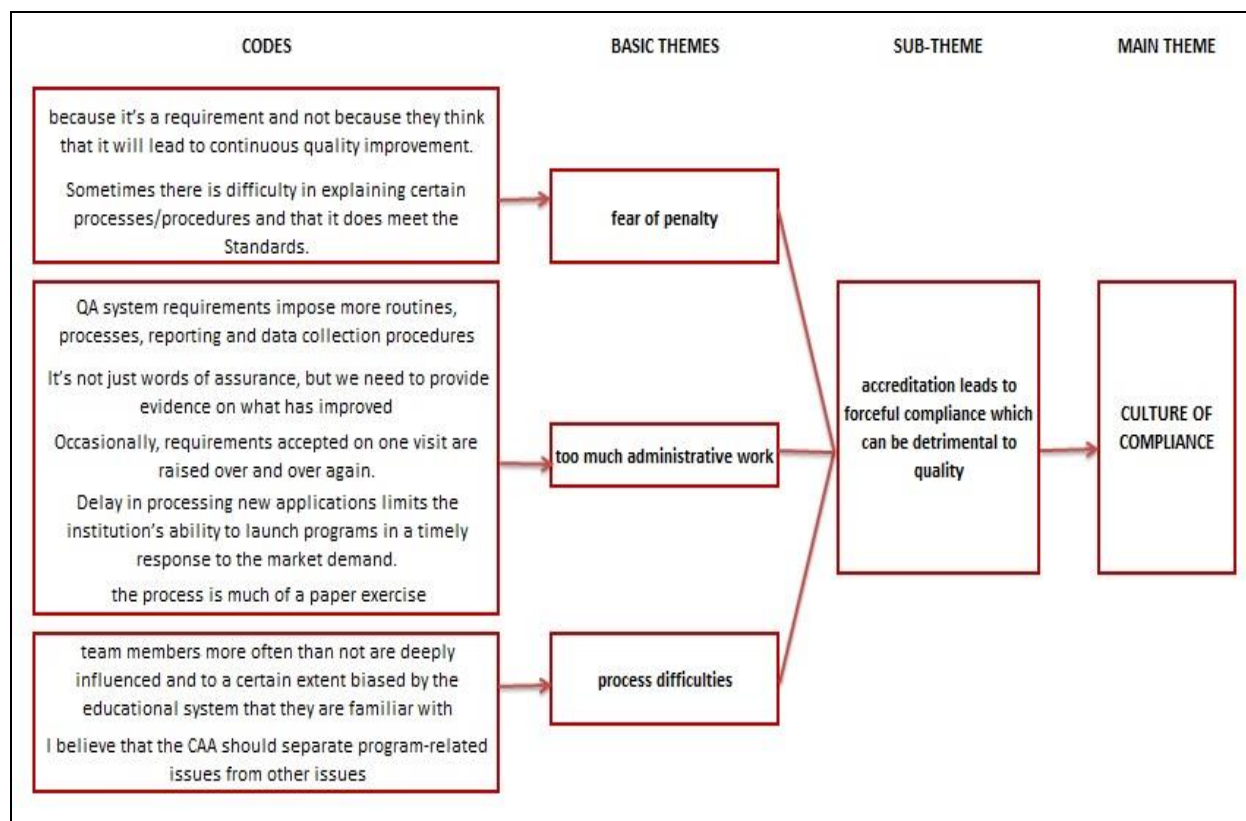
BU thought that academic staff at her institution engage in QA activities because it is a requirement from the CAA, not because they genuinely feel it will lead to continuous quality improvement. She stated “... they feel the QA system requirements (especially when it is a requirement from the CAA) impose more routines, processes, reporting and data collection procedures which diverts them from their main role which is to teach”. She further stated, “Most of the QA process in our University is done as a requirement for the ministry and is basically a paper exercise”. On the other hand, institutions with fewer academic programs considered standardization of quality assurance process to work in their favor. SS indicated that her institution followed a top-down approach initially due to some resistance from academic staff. To simplify procedures, the institution uses templates that are aligned with the CAA Standards.

She said, "... if they know its column no 1, that's what they need to work on. And, it's all aligned with the CAA Standards. For example, Standard 1 relates to governance; 2 is quality assurance – it is completely synced with the numbering of the Standards".

JP indicates that a compliance mentality was prevalent at her institution a few years ago, but now she states, "...it is becoming a part of an everyday thing". However, the accreditation process itself was thought to be cumbersome to many delaying program offerings, micromanagement of program related changes, and subjectivities of external review teams. JP said, "...CAA accreditation has helped in some cases and, as you know, it has been slow in others which have hindered projects that that we wanted to implement immediately. The timeline has been slow between our submission and the time we get it approved, that puts us at a disadvantage in offering new programs compared to unaccredited universities in the UAE or in implementing changes to existing programs as well". MP had a similar view- he believed that some flexibility to make changes to programs without having to go through a time-consuming process would have helped the institution better. He also stated the delay in processing of applications was a hindrance in launching new programs in a timely response to market demand.

For SG, while standardization of process was a good aspect of accreditation, the diversity of accreditation team members was a disadvantage. She said, "...the accreditation team members more often than not are deeply influenced and to a certain extent biased by the educational system that they are familiar with and this has a bearing on the accreditation process and their feedback. In the case of program accreditation, this issue is quite pronounced as the subject experts sometimes have very strong views about program content and structure (mostly based on the program at their own institution) which affects their view of the program that they are assessing". BU shared a similar view. She said, "...the process is rigorous and thorough, but some of the requirements are based on US accreditation and not always appropriate to all universities. Sometimes there is difficulty in explaining certain processes/procedures and that it does actually meet the Standards. Occasionally, Requirements accepted on one visit are raised over and over again".

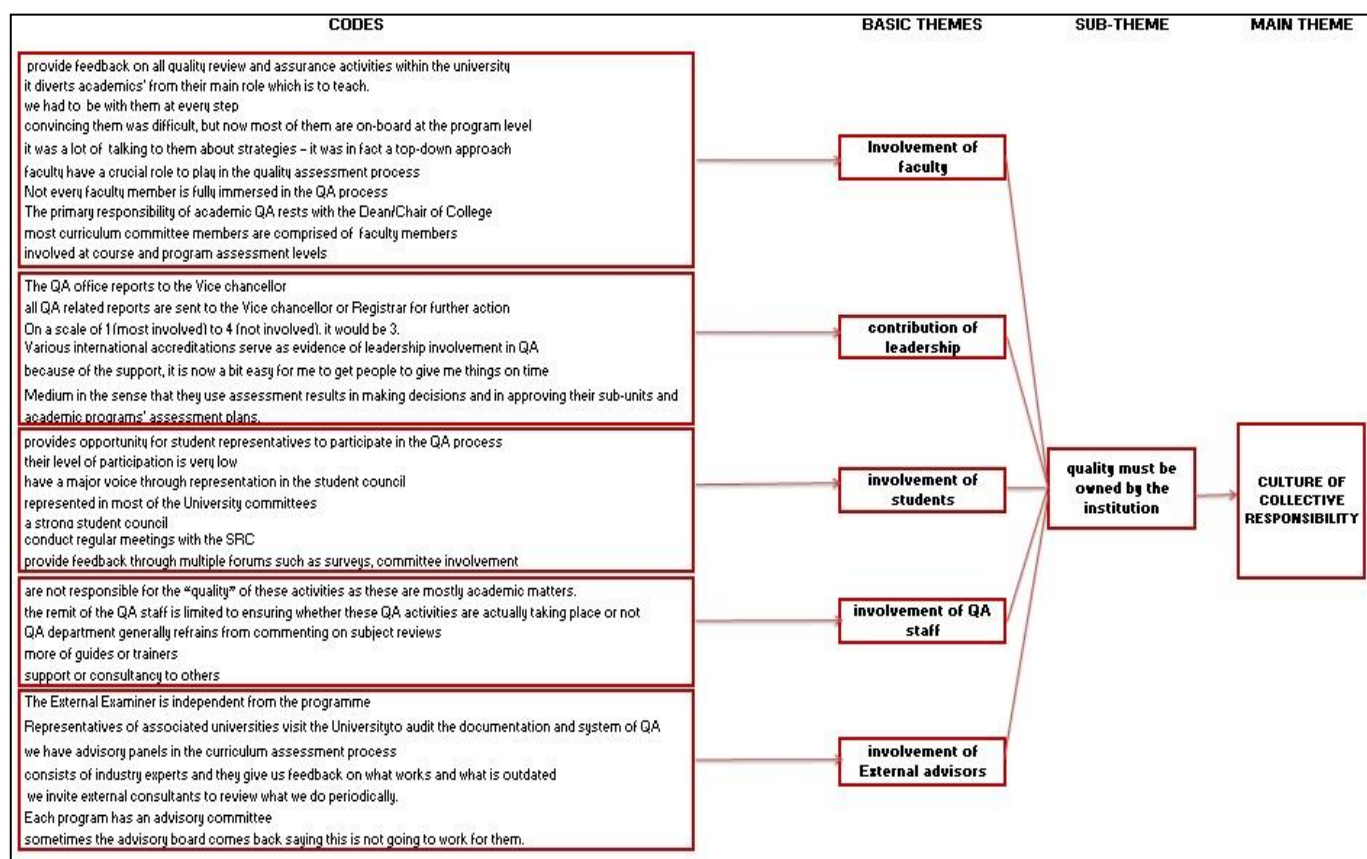
FIGURE 36: FROM CODES TO THEME 2 (QUALITY CULTURE)



Theme (3) Three - Culture of collective responsibility

For quality assurance to become firmly embedded in an institution, it requires a commitment to continuous improvement from all its members combined with a spirit of enquiry and continuous learning. The value of a quality assurance process can be judged based on how individuals in the institution imbibe information and make meaning out of it which leads to a more critically reflective culture. Some researchers reported social integration as a positive outcome of the quality assurance process (Haapakorpi, 2011). From the lens of external evaluation, quality is the collective responsibility of the institution. Analyses of responses suggest that working together starts with participation of all members in useful discussions and reflection of practice this was evident in the interview data in varying degrees depending on the institutional climate (Figure 38).

FIGURE 37: FROM CODES TO THEME 3 (QUALITY CULTURE)



Academic staff are the main custodians of higher education quality and a gradual broadening of this custodianship is seen through the observations from the interview data. For example, SS recollects her initial experience in training and mentoring academic staff in understanding and accepting the importance of quality assurance. She said, “Our faculty members came from very different and varied backgrounds; so most of them did not know what quality assurance meant. Literally, we had to mentor them and be with them at every step on how to come up with expected learning outcomes, benchmarking, and improvement plans. Because these were terms that came from the industry and very new to institutions, many were not convinced that higher education needed a quality assurance process just like the industrial sector. So, initially it was a lot of mentoring and talking to them about strategies – it was in fact a top-down approach we followed. And yes, whenever the CAA organizes a workshop on quality assurance or benchmarking, we come back and share it with our peer group, sometimes in the form of presentations”. For JP, the situation was much different. Being a branch campus, a Quality Assurance system was already in place at her institution. However, she claims that the level of

involvement of faculty has evolved over the years making it now “a very much faculty-wide thing”. She further stated, “... every faculty member delivering courses are quite involved in the process now. So, I would say the level of involvement and understanding and the confidence that faculty members have in implementing changes as part of the QA process have greatly evolved over the years”.

SS shared the challenges she faced in getting faculty involved in the quality assurance process. She stated “...some of them asked me - I’ve been teaching successfully for the last 20 years, so why do you want to redefine the curriculum”? However, she claims that the situation is a lot better now with most accepting the fact that quality assurance helps transparency, accountability, and sharing best practices which is integral to improvement. Although FC was vocal about the usefulness of empowering academic and administrative units to engage them in all components of program review through the Institutional Effectiveness Council at his institution, he admits that the level of engagement is not as expected “...we expect 100 percent engagement of all institutional members, but the commitment is generally low”. SG said that not all faculty members are fully immersed in the QA process. She said, “... sometimes their involvement is limited to completing subject review reports after the delivery of a course. Faculty members who are Program Coordinators are far more involved in the QA process”. She stated that faculty view QA processes as activities that impinge on their academic freedom, creating unnecessary workload; and the intended outcome of QA activities i.e., improving the overall quality of academic provision is often overlooked. BU considers that different stakeholders (academic staff, admin head, senior management as well as students) have different views regarding a quality assurance system. According to her “...some view it as a form of managerial control, lot of paper work, while others feel such a system can actually ensure improvement”.

To engage faculty meaningfully also requires taking responsibility for decision making and actions taken. Leadership must encourage such reflection leading to organizational acceptance and learning. Emphasizing the importance of academic leadership in enforcing the implementation of the quality assurance activities, SG stated, “In the last 12 years, I have seen very few instances of proactive attitude towards continuous improvement of programs. Almost every institution that I have worked at has policies for review and improvement of program and subjects which are implemented to varying degrees. Our institutions need a top-down approach

to stimulate the QA system”. AA and SS find the involvement of leadership is limited to the extent of making decisions and in approving their sub-units and academic programs' assessment plans. BU acknowledges that leadership at her university has been a major support in enabling quality initiatives. JP agrees that leadership at her institution has played a key role in getting faculty involved in QA activities. She states, “... to be honest, because of the support, it is now a bit easy for me to get people to give me things on time and to look at the nature of changes”. For MP, the various international accreditations achieved by his institution are backed by the support and involvement of the leadership in the process.

The involvement of Quality Assurance staff at most institutions are limited to ensuring that QA activities take place as scheduled. SG said, “They are not responsible for the “quality” of these activities as these are mostly academic matters. For example, the QA department may audit whether the course file is completed. However, the QA department generally refrains from commenting whether the subject review written by the concerned faculty member is good or bad”. Other administrative department heads also have a limited role in the process. They only ensure that program requirements are fulfilled. SS stated that administrative heads have a clear guidance on what needs to be done based on well-defined KPI's “...at the end of the year they provide me a report on what went well, where they are doing good, and what needs to be improved”.

The role of external advisors or advisory boards is mostly developmental rather than monitoring. Their consultation is most needed in developing new programs, reviewing learning outcomes, or in developing projects and internships. BU said that her University relies on its External Examiners to provide advice on standards and comparability of qualifications UK equivalent degrees. The External Examiner is independent from the program and has the role of ensuring that the assessment of students is carried out in such a way that the Board of Examiners can assure itself that students have met the module and program learning outcomes. She added, “Representatives of our associated universities visit routinely to audit the documentation and system of quality assurance in place for the programs”. The expertise of an external advisor is always professional than academic. SS states that the advisory panel at her college mostly consists of industry experts and they provide advice on what works and what is outdated in the labour market. She added, “...also our alumni are working in various parts of the world and they

have a big say in how the curriculum should go, and give useful inputs on the requirements of international licensing exams”. Only one respondent stated that his institution did not have an external advisory board, “...not so far; but we intend to have external advisors in the future”.

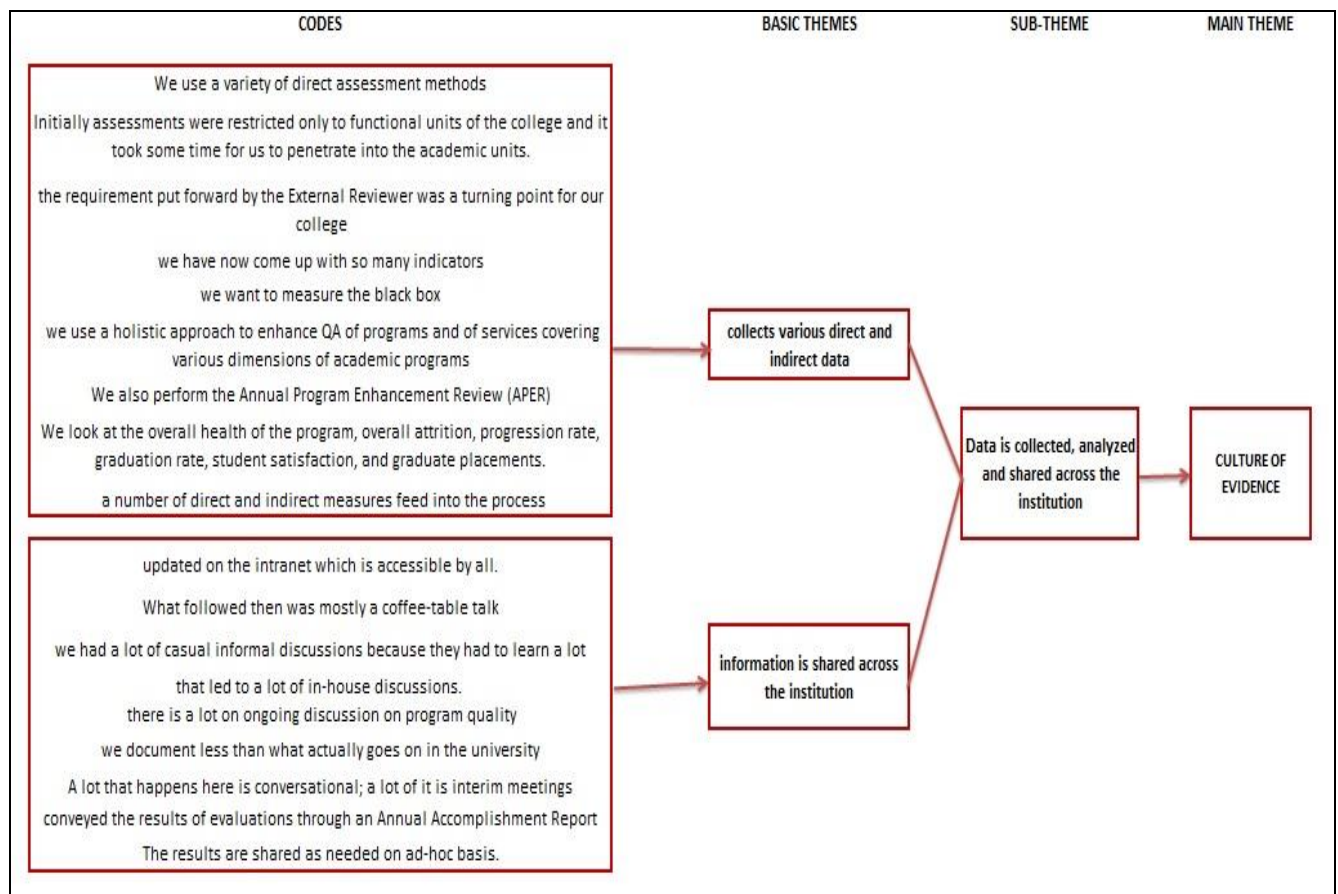
Student satisfaction matter the most to universities as they are in a better position to evaluate the quality of the curriculum, teaching, support services, and facilities. They play a key role in quality management by providing feedback that seek to inform and enhance student-learning experience. Student evaluation of teaching and learning is increasingly used as a quality enhancement measure in most UAE institutions. Such engagement is evident through their participation in surveys and student council meetings. According to SS, “Students have a major voice in our college through representation in the student council. They express their opinion on governance matters and improvement to programs and facilities mostly during meetings and through surveys”. AA believes that student involvement in the QA process is high in the sense that they provide feedback on curriculum, pedagogy and services either indirectly through surveys or directly through projects, thesis, exams...etc. JP indicated that student representatives are part of the education committee at her institution. Providing an example of their involvement, she said, “...when we were considering a bit of blended learning- it was first taken to students to see what they thought about it”.

BU however believed that students do not fully utilize the opportunity provided to them to take part in the QA process. She expressed her concern stating, “...although they understand the importance of these meetings, their level of participation in feedback surveys or attendance and engagement during the programme review meetings, Academic Board, or Senate are very low”. From the observations gleaned through the interviews, it seems that UAE institutions are placing more emphasis on the learner voice as a way of enhancing their engagement in building cohesive learning communities. At least one institution claimed to be involving students in broader discussions of issues affecting teaching and learning. Where the level of participation of students is reported as minimum it would require wider discussions within the university on perceived barriers to student participation in quality matters.

Theme (4) Four - Culture of evidence

The growing popularity of quality assurance processes have heightened the need for delineating the kinds and sources of data that will help institutions make sense of the information collected and decide a future course of action based on it. The mode of collecting data in an institution can take many forms- it may be direct or indirect and these different modes of collecting evidences are well-established in all UAE institutions (Figure 40).

FIGURE 38: FROM CODES TO THEME 4 (QUALITY CULTURE)



According to FC, his institution uses a variety of surveys (course evaluation, student satisfaction, and reviews of course files etc.) for assessment of programs, and teaching and learning. The collected data is evaluated considering threats to internal and external validity and results conveyed through an Annual Accomplishment Report. The reports are presented during Committee Meetings on Program Effectiveness (CPEs), through the Institutional Effectiveness

Council, and the University Council to initiate appropriate actions. BU states that direct assessments used at her institution include module assessment papers, projects, exams, dissertations, end of term evaluation by instructor, and program quality review report. Indirect data on the other hand is collected through surveys and external examiner reports. MP follows a holistic approach to quality assurance of programs and services using various dimensions of academic programs. These include Student Surveys, Employee Surveys, Student Evaluations of Teaching, Graduate Destination Surveys, Graduate Retention Rate, Employment Rate, etc.; in addition, they also conduct an Annual Program Enhancement Review (APER).

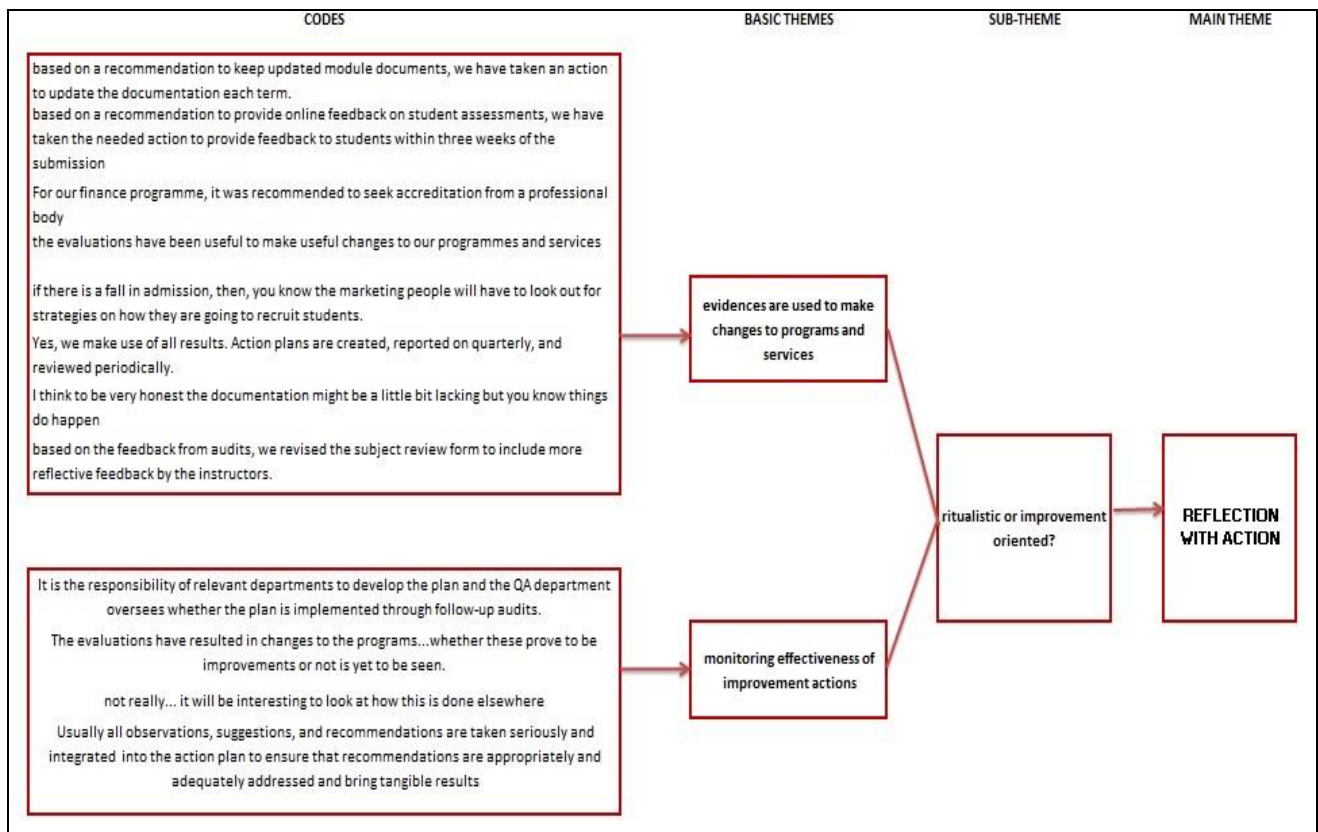
JP states that at her institution, quality evaluations happen annually at the institutional level. However, they also review programs that have high failure rates. She stated “...we look at the overall health of the program, overall attrition, progression rate, graduation rate, student satisfaction, and graduate placements. All this is done once a year at the institutional level. We don’t go in detail into each and every program but it is more of a health check and an overall view of the programs we offer”. SS also recollects that at her institution quality assessments were initially restricted to functional units only, but now they collect data on the academic units as well. She said, “At the program effectiveness level, we have now come up with so many indicators that during a recent review, an External Reviewer commended that it should be a model for the UAE. It’s a whole lot of indicators- both direct and indirect”.

Individual bits of data collected through a quality evaluation process takes on meaning only when it is analyzed and interpreted to support the claim being made. The interview data provides an indication that in addition to collecting various forms of data, UAE institutions systematically analyze, and disseminate data in forms that are easily understandable by various institutional members. For example, BU states that her institution follows a schedule to conduct quality evaluations, and the results of such evaluations are communicated to various university boards and heads of departments. SG states that detailed reports are sent to all relevant stakeholders. In addition summarized presentations highlighting key points are disseminated to particular individuals. JP uses Tableau for presentation of assessment data and does further analysis based on the needs of the faculty and other members of the institution.

Theme (5) Five - Connecting Reflection with Action

Just as data does not speak for itself unless interpreted, evidence does not either. Evidence is used to advance an argument (Wergin, 2003). It should be used to show how it has led to a better understanding of an issue or to solve an existing problem. Program evaluations and stakeholder feedback can add a lot of value to the institution if it leads to actionable consequences. While there is much data collected and shared, whether such data is being used to make improvements or ritualistically done to satisfy accreditation requirements is questionable (Figure 41).

FIGURE 39: FROM CODES TO THEME 5 (QUALITY CULTURE)



Institutions claim to be using data to make improvements, but these seem to have mostly occurred as a result of an accreditation process. For example, BU states that a number of changes were made to programs and services based on recommendations that were made from external evaluations. She said, "...in our MBA programme, based on a recommendation to keep updated module documents, we have taken an action to update the documentation each term. Again, based on a recommendation to provide online feedback on student assessments, we have taken

the needed action to provide feedback to students within three weeks of the submission. For our finance programme, it was recommended to seek accreditation from a professional body in the field of finance, such as CFA. This program has now obtained Accreditation from ICAEW. So yes, the evaluations have been useful to make useful changes to our programs and services”. At his institution, MP reports that action plans are created, reported every quarter, and reviewed periodically by the QA team to ensure completion within the projected timeframe. He provided an example stating how the results of QA evaluation have helped the institution in improving its student retention rate. He said, “... we introduced remedial courses, launched the student learning support system, implemented a student writing center, and faculty, students and staff have been trained to use Blackboard more effectively”. AA also agrees that quality evaluations have resulted in changes to programs. The proposed changes were presented to the CAA in the form of substantive changes and implemented when approved. However, he was skeptical about whether these changes will actually result in improvements. The institution did not have a strategy to follow-up on the effectiveness of improvements made to programs and services. He said, “... not really... it will be interesting to look at how this is done elsewhere”. FC stated that his institution takes all observations, suggestions, and recommendations very seriously and integrates it into an action plan to ensure that it brings tangible results. He asserts that the work of the Program Effectiveness Committee is continuously monitored to make sure that action plans are implemented. However, whether these action plans have resulted in tangible improvements could not be established. JP provided an example of a recent program where a thorough assessment had taken place. She said, “We did this with numerous focus groups with current students, alumni, the external advisory board, and we also had an external consultant to actually come-in and review our program independently to make sure that it is in line with all the requirements. Another improvement we made was again for the XXX program - we looked at the students coming in and found them struggling a bit with English so we had another English course they had to pass before they entered the program. The XXX is the most recent one where extensive data has been used to look at students’ performances. Even the whole program structure and as a result of that and making sure that we are in line recent trends the whole program has been changed”. However, on follow-up of changes made to the program, she stated “...it is more of a health check and an overall view of the programs we offer”. She admits “... the documentation might be a little bit lacking, but you know things do happen”.

4.4.4 Summary of findings- Research Question 3

External evaluation affects various institutional constituencies. A general notion that arises out of the data from the survey and interviews is that the scope of internal quality assurance activities in most UAE universities was set to adapt to the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. Interview Respondents consider this as appropriate noting that the quality assurance in the UAE is relatively young. In light of the survey and interview results, it can be stated that UAE institutions are systematically collecting a variety of data most of which are stored and analyzed through custom-made and well-developed software systems. Although institutional specific, these systems were developed to meet CAA's accreditation requirements. Data collected through direct and indirect measures are primarily related to teaching and learning, academic support services, and research. The QA unit analyzes such data systematically and widely disseminates it across the institution. Institutions consider the results of quality assessment activities seriously, at least to the extent of achieving compliance and obtaining accreditation.

Creating a culture of quality is not an individual exercise – it works only if academic staff own it with the support of institutional leadership. People within a university interact with each other to face external demands and this creates adherents and opponents within the institutional community. Interview data confirms that the level of involvement of different stakeholders differed based on their expectations of quality assurance. Although academic staff expressed resistance to the process initially, reflections from interviews suggest that more have now come to accept the benefits of the process. The involvement of leadership has been limited to approving action plans and committing on resources. There is an increase in student representation in the QA process, although such representation is mostly indirect through surveys or student council meetings. It is evident that well-structured and systematic review processes have directed continuous improvement. Nevertheless, improvement actions, which were reported during interviews, suggest that, these have been actioned because of recommendations provided by accreditation teams. It could not be established if data from internal evaluations have in fact been used for program enhancement. The data from interviews also gives an impression that too much reporting and too many internal committees to oversee quality implementation may actually lead to bureaucracy. Although universities openly acknowledge the benefits of external

evaluation, a culture of compliance prevalent in UAE Universities raises questions on how they have embraced continuous improvement that is not bolted on to them by an external force.

4.5 Integration of Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III of the study

4.5.1 Connecting the three Phases

The overarching aim of this research was to evaluate if the UAE Standards for Licensure and Accreditation has had an impact on the quality of higher education provision in the non-federal Ministry licensed Higher Education Institutions in the UAE. In order to answer this central research question the study looked at the concept of impact from the theoretical lens of technical rationality (meeting pre-determined standards), political rationality (through the views of academic staff) and symbolic rationality (presence of a culture of evidence and improvement). The study was conducted in three phases.

Phase I of the study employed an exploratory sequential design. Using deductive content analysis qualitative data from External Review Team Reports was extracted to identify impact areas that related to the curricular domain. A Quality Rubric and scoring chart was developed in order to quantify the extracted data and statistically analyze it using an ex-post before-after comparison method. The results of the statistical analysis indicated that accreditation has had an impact on Program Design. The results showed significant improvements in institutional compliance with credit hour requirements, course content, program learning outcomes, sequencing of courses, and assessment methods from the first cycle of accreditation to the next. The impact of accreditation on Program Management indicated partial improvement. Admission requirements, adequacy of library holdings, and Information Technology showed significant improvement while other areas like academic advising, course delivery and management of course files did not indicate any improvement. Teaching quality measured by indicators such as compliance with workload requirements, sufficiency of faculty, faculty qualifications, and support staff qualifications did not show any improvement in scores from the first cycle to the next. Similarly, Program effectiveness did not show any improvement between initial and renewal of accreditation cycles.

Phase II of the study employed an explanatory sequential design. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather faculty perceptions of the impact of accreditation on the same impact dimensions identified in Phase I of the study. Statistical analysis using a non-parametric test indicated that faculty perceived the greatest impact of accreditation on Program Design, Program Management, and Program Effectiveness. Results indicated that accreditation did not have a significant impact on teaching quality. Also, the perceptions of faculty who were fully and partially involved in the accreditation process were more positive in their interpretation of the impact than those who were indirectly involved or indicated no involvement in the process. The researcher indulged in further investigation to understand the results obtained through the statistical analysis. An email interview was conducted with eight faculty members to gain further insights on the results of the survey data. The interview data revealed some significant information that was captured in four themes.

Increased institutional credibility was one such theme that was apparent in almost all responses. Faculty found great value in CAA's accreditation process claiming that it helped improve the curriculum, enhanced processes and achieving accreditation was a symbol of prestige. Another theme that emerged was the increased focus on learning outcomes. Faculty claimed that CAA accreditation has helped them comply with the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework in the UAE, and ensure that their graduates acquire the stated learning outcomes of the program. They also assert that the local accreditation by the CAA has helped sharpen program curriculum development making it easier for them to apply for international accreditation of programs. However, faculty perceived a negative relationship between accreditation and teaching quality. The interview data revealed that accreditation resulted in increased workload due to extensive documentation requirements of the CAA. Further, they stated that accreditation only measures academic administration through classroom management and technical aspects of pedagogy, but do not look at classroom teaching or expertise of individual faculty. Accreditation was also associated with symbolic compliance. While continuous monitoring of programs, increased awareness of QA activities resulting in substantial changes to curriculum, faculty claimed that recommendations from accreditation teams were taken seriously by the institution and actions taken immediately rather than when such recommendations were raised internally. It was also reported that sometimes changes were easily manipulated by the institution as the accreditation process is heavily paper-based.

The concept of symbolic compliance was investigated in Phase III of the research by investigating if a quality culture was prevalent in UAE institutions. This feat was accomplished through a survey and semi-structured interviews with heads of Quality Assurance units of ten institutions. The survey gathered data on the structural components of quality assurance while the interviews focused on whether QA activities are used to continually improve programs and services or have remained a paper exercise. The survey data confirmed that continuous monitoring of academic programs through various direct and indirect tools of assessment was systematically carried out at most institutions. However, whether the results of these assessments are used in a manner to support continuous improvement could not be substantiated. Analysis of the interview data suggests that academic staff, leadership, and administrative staff have slowly begun to accept the benefits of quality assurance. Although considered by few as a paper exercise, UAE institutions continue to comply with accreditation regulations at least to maintain its accredited status.

TABLE 28: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE THREE PHASES OF THE STUDY

	Technical Perspective (Review of ERT Reports)	Political Perspective (Survey and Interviews with Academic Staff)	Symbolic Perspective (Survey and Interviews with QA Staff)
Positive Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program learning outcomes • Credit hour requirements Course content • Sequencing of courses and progression • Assessment methods • Admission requirements Adequacy of library holdings • Adequacy of Information Technology • Increased attention to professional and international accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program learning outcomes • Alignment of qualifications to <i>QFEmirates</i> • Credit hour requirement • Course structure, sequencing and progression • Adequacy of Library holdings • Adequacy of Information Technology • Course file evidences • Improved internal quality mechanisms for program monitoring & evaluation • Institutional credibility • International accreditation of academic programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound quality structure, policies, practices • Involvement of leadership • Wide range of data collected and analyzed • Data/ reports shared with institutional members • Data used in strategic decision making • Faculty are becoming more receptive to QA practices • Increased value in external evaluation • Increased attempt to involve students in QA process

	Technical Perspective (Review of ERT Reports)	Political Perspective (Survey and Interviews with Academic Staff)	Symbolic Perspective (Survey and Interviews with QA Staff)
Negative Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program relevance to labor market requirements is not well-substantiated in re-accreditation reports • Minimal involvement of academic boards • Course delivery, management of course files • Sufficiency of faculty • Faculty workload • Faculty qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty workload • Compliance mentality • Flaws in assessing teaching quality • Increased administrative load , excessive paper work • Lack of time to focus on teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance mentality has driven improvement • Less representation of academic staff in quality committees • Lack of student interest in QA activities

Overall, the impact of accreditation from Phase I and Phase II of the study have shown more or less similar results. This has strengthened the validity of the study. ERT Reports indicated persistent issues with faculty workload and sufficiency, and interviews with academic staff in Phase II provided reasons behind these findings. It may be that ignoring the conditions and contexts of academics' work pushes them to treat quality assurance practices like a "beast to be fed" (Newton, 2000) with ritualistic practices. Quality assurance and quality enhancement are said to be integral parts of the same process. The results from this study show that where good practice and processes for ensuring quality have been implemented it has been based on the recommendations of accreditation review teams rather than driven by an identified gap in internal process. In general, a feedback mechanism seems to work in practice, but is more directed by a compliance mentality than an actual change in the culture of intuitions. While the perceived value of quality assurance is high among UAE universities, its role as an enhancement tool is not well established.

CHAPTER 5- CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Outline of the Chapter

Starting with a brief summary of the thesis, this chapter brings together the various findings of the study and discusses the implications for future research on impact analyses in the UAE. In addition to the summary, it comprises of the following sections: (1) Key Findings (2) Recommendations (2) Implications of the study (3) Limitations (4) Scope for further research and (5) Conclusions.

5.2 General Summary of the Study:

The prime objective of External Quality Assurance (EQA) is to improve the quality of higher education institutions and its academic provisions. Yet, the usefulness of formal, externally focused quality assurance mechanisms remains a continuing debate among policy makers, researchers, institutions and the community at large. On one hand, Governments attach growing importance to quality assurance systems and insist that quality must be continuously assessed and evaluated. On the other hand, criticisms are raised that external evaluations are too demanding, ironically, to the long-term determinant of quality. In leveling these arguments, most research in this area argues that although pressure forces change, actual reforms emerge from within universities (Stensaker, 2007). Regardless of the diversity in the kinds and scope of external quality assurance procedures, it is expected to have an impact on institutions and academic programs that leads to the improvement of quality. This thesis is an attempt to verify that very fact - Has external quality assurance in the UAE had an impact on the quality of educational provision in Ministry licensed non-federal institutions?

Three overlapping sociological theories (new public management, neo-institutional, and organizational behavior) set the foundation to understand the impact of external evaluation on higher education institutions. The emphasis on market mechanisms and new public management had generated a loss of trust in higher education institutions to prove its capacity to ensure adequate standards of academic quality. The emergence of Quality Assurance systems (via neo-

institutionalism) was seen as an attempt to regain this trust by restating quality agendas through a system of peer review. The contours of this system are however determined by the purposes of quality and quality assurance according to various national contexts. Moreover, the expectations of the system vary with respect to the emphasis placed on accountability, improvement, legitimacy, and regulatory frameworks. The thesis further transcends to revealing existing divides between scholarship and what practitioners hold on the ground through the premise of the organizational behavior theory. Apparently, all published research on the impact of EQA identified in this study uses it as a policy instrument to measure its effectiveness on institutions from various perspectives. Some have explored quality assurance using a techno-rational approach while others have adopted models grounded in organizational theory with a focus on group dynamics, culture, and decision making within an institution. A few studies discussed in this dissertation have been skeptical about the overall effects of EQA on academic quality or efficiency of operations of higher education institutions. It should be noted that much of the empirical data in these studies were based on case studies that analyzed the impact of EQA on institutional processes, academic staff, and on teaching and learning.

As far as the UAE is concerned, mechanisms for accountability through licensure and accreditation processes have no doubt been crucial factors in improving the quality of higher education provision. The findings from this study showed significant improvements in areas related to Program Design, Program Management and Program Monitoring while no improvement was seen in the indicators of teaching quality. Due to scarce previous research in this area and without sufficient evidence, it is indeed difficult to imagine how these varied quality systems within higher education institutions in the UAE had materialized without an element of external evaluation to steer quality higher education provision. The enduring truth is that external quality assurance is in existence and continues to serve public good.

5.3 Key Findings

This research was designed to explore one overarching question: “Have the UAE Standards for Licensure and Accreditation had an impact on the quality of higher education provision in Ministry licensed non-federal Higher Education Institutions?” From this research, emerged some

revelations and clear signs that UAE institutions are in fact contributing to and fulfilling the Standards set by the Commission for Academic Accreditation to achieve institutional and academic quality. There were five main findings identified during the course of this study. Each is discussed below with due reference to the literature.

1. From the results of the evaluation of External Review Team Reports and interviews with faculty members, it was apparent that CAA accreditation showed positive signs of improvement in program design. In particular, articulating learning outcomes and mapping these at course, program, and institutional levels demonstrate a move to a results-oriented culture. Pursuing international accreditation has influenced the refinement of learning outcomes as institutions satisfy multiple accreditation requirements. Overall, the process is perceived as increasing the credibility of academic programs and in confronting competition effectively.
2. Accreditation has resulted in greater consistency and standardization of procedures institutions apply to their internal quality assurance making them more responsive and flexible to external demands. This seems to reflect Clarks (1998) “entrepreneurial university” in many ways. While results suggest that smaller institutions found standardization of procedures useful, more mature institutions felt that standardization resulted in more paper work and ritualistic practices than actual improvement. However, the study reveals that external evaluation in the UAE definitely helped create strong institutional identities and a work culture that openly embraces change.
3. Faculty are committed to their professions and value teaching, learning, research and community engagement the most. Anything outside this realm is unconvincing to them as substantiated by previous research (Anderson, 2006; Amaral, 2006; Watty, 2006). A revelation from this study was that teaching quality was conceptualized differently by faculty members. From the lens of accreditation, teaching quality represents classroom management, workload compliance, and other technical aspects of teaching. However, for faculty, teaching quality was related to their professionalism, expertise, and autonomy in practice. The main concern expressed by academic staff was that the focus of external evaluation is on management of teaching rather than evaluating individual faculty on their subject expertise or their profession. Arguing that quality evaluation should focus more on encouraging academic’s self-regulation of teaching Cheng (2017, p.162) states,

“Quality evaluation needs to respond to the issue of academics’ responsibility for enacting and improving academic standards, move away from acting as a mechanism of state surveillance.”

4. Resources and infrastructure changes such as adequacy of library holdings and improved communication through provision of reliable and robust information technology systems were most noticeable. Institutions were able to leverage on the advice provided by CAA’s External Review Team and obtain more resources, realign its priorities, and attain higher standards, albeit via coercion. From this perspective external quality assurance has been an effective mechanism for supporting change.
5. Although UAE institutions have formalized structures for quality assurance and developed sound policies and practices, these seem to have been fostered by a compliance mentality. The link connecting ‘evidence’ to ‘improvement’ is not well established. Newton (2000) states that compliance with external demands of quality ignores the views of internal members who are actually affected by the process and promotes ritual responses. The overall coordination of QA and its impact on planning and improvement of academic programs are found less formalized in some institutions. Further in-depth research should be conducted with a larger sample size of institutions.

Relating these findings to the theoretical standpoint of New Public Management, it can be concluded that the research findings support the basic tenets of the theory in that external evaluation has generally improved the quality of higher education provision in the UAE. These improvements can be identified with coercive, normative and mimetic forces of new-institutionalism. The national implementation of an external quality assurance mechanism has promoted coercive isomorphism in the higher education sector, while mimetic isomorphism is evident in institutions adopting industry mechanisms such as TQM and ISO in managing and enhancing quality. Normative pressure which is related to professionalization is evident in UAE institutions seeking the services of external advisory boards and members of the industry for planning educational programs, internships and research programs. Organizational behavior theory provided the link to analyze the dynamics of organizational change within UAE institutions. Supportive institutional leadership and increased acceptance of the importance of accreditation amongst faculty has boosted the need to maintain institutional recognition and that of academic programs. However, coerciveness seems to have permeated deep into academic

matters resulting in the process being considered ritualistic and paper-based. The study reveals that the power of external evaluation seems to have diminished in certain aspects of micro level phenomena within higher education institutions, especially in enhancing teaching quality.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, a few recommendations are provided for consideration by the CAA.

1. Tertiary education has always been a high priority item in the political agenda of the UAE. The quality assurance framework in the UAE has so far been able to ensure that Universities are able to meet Governments aspirations for ensuring the quality of academic programs. One can find a seamless integration of accountability and improvement aspects enforced through CAA's external evaluation activities. However, performance reporting in higher education through large-scale impact analyses though gaining momentum in advanced countries, has not begun in the UAE. It is suggested that the CAA should establish a framework for large-scale meta-analyses to be done periodically. This will increase transparency of the EQA process.
2. In considering systematic impact analyses in the future, the CAA should adopt a sound procedure to collect feedback from higher education institutions and external reviewers as soon as an EQA procedure is completed. This could be in the form of SWOT analyses, survey questionnaires, or short structured interviews which discusses the QA procedure and its impact on the institution. Although the CAA collects this information in one form or another, it is hardly put to good use in producing quality reports.
3. Literature indicates that the importance of conducting impact analyses is widely recognized in many national legislations. For example, the revised Standards (2015) of ESG states that "External quality assurance process should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published". Similarly ANECA in Spain, in cooperation with AQU Catalunya, produces an annual statement of developments and improvements in higher education. It is suggested that the Ministry of Education encourages the CAA to produce similar periodic reports based on its external evaluation activities.

4. An element of interest in pursuing international accreditation of academic programs in response to competition, global recognition, and the thrust placed by the CAA to pursue continuous self-improvement is emerging in many UAE institutions. The study indicated the desire of institutions for global recognition, and to stay competitive in the industry. As a long-term strategy, it would be desirable for the CAA to consider the impact of various international accreditation systems on UAE institutions and possibly develop coordinated efforts for external evaluations, and mutual recognition of accreditation decisions which will in turn reduce the burden on institutions in preparing for multiple reviews.
5. Insofar as viewing EQA from the lens of a political process, it is healthier to recognize the importance of faculty in the academic process. Perhaps external evaluation should focus on pedagogical practices in working contexts rather than just the management of teaching and learning. Therefore the CAA should pay more attention to the conditions and contexts of academics' work, making sure that external evaluation does not remain a process of "feeding the beast" with ritualistic practices (Newton, 2002) but work to make academics active participants in the process leading to actual quality improvement. What is needed is to re-build academics' trust in their profession by valuing their professional judgment and inspiring them to pursue excellence and continuous improvement in teaching rather than undermining their contribution as managerial professionalism to meet accreditation requirements. Higher education institutions on the other hand need to take initiatives through rewards and recognition and encourage academic staff to improve their teaching practice.

If there is a genuine desire to recognize the diverse views regarding quality and to strive for educational improvement, then the external quality assurance process should be re-designed in a way that will further these ends.

5.5 Contributions of the Study

The findings of this study build on existing literature on impact analyses and could prove significant to multiple stakeholders.

Contribution to the Literature

The current study makes several important contributions to the literature. This study is perhaps the first in the region to examine if and how the CAA's Standards for Licensure and Accreditation has impacted the provision of academic programs in the UAE's non-federal Ministry licensed higher education institutions. The study adds to the world literature on impact analyses by conducting a more targeted examination of the impacts of CAA accreditation on academic programs offered by UAE institutions from the lens of external evaluation. From a methodological stand-point, the study utilized longitudinal data from External Review Team Reports collected at two time-points which provides a more comprehensive understanding of whether and how improvements have occurred from one accreditation cycle to the next. These findings are furthered with the results of surveys and interviews of institutional representatives supporting the validity of the research findings.

For Higher Education Institutions

For Higher Education Institutions in the UAE, this research closes a huge gap in the literature which has so far been restricted to single institutional case studies. The findings illuminate a unique aspect of the accountability issue- literature on impact studies mostly highlight the great divide between scholarship and ground reality. However, this study revealed that faculty perceptions were mostly in accord with the findings obtained from analysis of accreditation reports. It shows that faculty are more involved in the accreditation activity and understand the nuances and deficiencies of the process very clearly. Revelations from faculty interviews indicated that accreditation has become an integral part of faculty activity in UAE institutions and that they take pride in achieving an accredited status for the programs/discipline they represent. The findings of this study also show that CAA accreditation was the prime force for implementation of internal QA systems in almost all UAE universities. It is also worth mentioning that the support from institutional leadership was regarded by most institutions as the building block for establishment of a sound QA system. As evidenced in this study, and as openly acknowledged by faculty and QA Heads, CAA accreditation has played a significant role in the growth of UAE's tertiary education system.

For the Commission for Academic Accreditation

For the Commission for Academic Accreditation, this study will provide a foundation for conducting impact studies on a comprehensive scale, so it can provide reliable knowledge about the effects and mechanisms of external evaluations to the public. Such comprehensive evaluations can explain macro-level phenomena (e.g. accreditation actions, or organizational changes) and micro-level phenomena (e.g. attitudes and preferences of individuals), effectively capturing the dynamics of the system along with the social causal mechanisms that brought about the changes. Further, such studies would help the CAA develop a deeper understanding of the relationship that exists between accreditation and the ultimate changes that occur in higher education institutions; for example, how institutional stakeholders perceive and value the effects of accreditation and what are the desirable and undesirable effects of accreditation on matters of institutional governance, academic programs, internal quality assurance, research, faculty, and administration. It would also help the CAA gain a deeper understanding of the different procedural and methodological approaches used by QAA's world-wide in conducting large-scale impact studies.

In addition to maintaining its credibility, impact analyses can provide useful information to the UAE Government for comparison of its external evaluation processes and developments on a regional and international scale.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in this study, most of which relate to generalizability and data constraints experienced by the researcher during the course of the study.

1. First, the quality rubric developed by the researcher used as a medium to extract and rate contents of CAA's accreditation reports was developed using selected criteria stated in the CAA Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. It may not be possible to replicate the study using this rubric as an instrument by other national accreditation systems. Nevertheless, many of these descriptors may be found in differing interpretations, and may be modified to suit specific accreditation contexts.

2. Some Accreditation Reports did not precisely follow the structure of the Standards. For example, in a few cases, narratives on assessment methods or faculty workload were missing causing problems with coding and rating of data. Following a more standardized approach in the formatting of ERT Reports would be useful for such analyses in the future.
3. Another methodological limitation of the study was that it was difficult to obtain email addresses of faculty members responding to the survey. Responses were erratic in spite of repeated reminders sent to coordinators of each of the fifteen institutions. To meet minimum data requirements, the researcher had to switch to printed questionnaires and manually add responses to the survey database. It appears that paper-based surveys may yield better results, although time consuming. Moreover, only faculty from identified institutions and specific departments were chosen. This did not constitute a representative sample of faculty across all UAE licensed institutions. Another limitation of the study was the limited time faculty were able or willing to discuss preliminary study results.
4. Practical experiences of impact analyses in higher education suggest that useful information is not very easily acquired. Accreditation reports chosen in Phase I of the study were from institutions that have existed for some time, i.e. these are considered more mature institutions and have undergone multiple accreditation visits; newer institutions were not included as it did not meet the criteria specified in the research design. Further, the base-line and end-line data used in Phase I of the analysis were collected from two different time periods, between an interval of 4-5 years. The study did not examine what happened in between this time, and if the impact could have been a result of any intermediate events. It is therefore very difficult to say with any amount of accuracy that the changes reported are in fact a result of accreditation. The time gap between accreditation reviews could have triggered developmental impulses from many directions e.g., a program could have achieved international accreditation from agencies such as ABET, AACSB etc., generally improving the quality of the program
5. Finally, the results obtained from the survey and interview questions are limited to the extent that faculty and QA staff understood the statements in the questionnaire and answered them honestly.

The methodological limitations described above requires further probing in future impact studies that will be conducted in this area so they could make valuable contributions to improve the quality of higher education.

5.7 Future Directions

The current study has contributed to the impact literature by providing a UAE perspective to the value of external evaluation. It also contributed to the currently limited understanding of external intervention on the quality of academic programs from the perspectives of the quality assurance agency as well as stakeholders. The findings of this study indicate that while accreditation is associated with statistically significant improvement in management of programs and pedagogy, academics believed that certain aspects of accreditation were cumbersome and prescriptive necessitating time commitments to fulfill accreditation requirements. These findings add support to previous impact research that accreditation has a positive impact on the general management of academic programs, but not on teaching quality (Coria, Deluca, and Martinez, 2010; Lemaitre et al, 2011; Cheng 2011; Said et al., 2011).

These findings become meaningful when accreditation results are compared over time. They strengthen the association between initial participation in an accreditation review and the demonstrated improvement in academic programs during the renewal of accreditation cycle. The study could not establish that improvements have occurred due to maturation effects or socio-environmental impacts on the institution. In order to gain a more complete understanding of the impact, future research should aim to replicate the current study with a larger sample of Accreditation Reports. Future research efforts would be enhanced by collecting data from at least three or four accreditation cycles. This would allow researchers to further examine which areas have had the greatest impact, study trends, and understand if and how the intensity of impact changes or fluctuates over time. Another goal of future research should be to expand the coverage of the study to include all of the eleven criteria in the CAA's Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. This research was very focused and restricted to only those criteria that impacted teaching and learning, leaving other important areas such as research and community development largely aside. This is not to be seen as a limitation though, but rather as a further task for establishing a more comprehensive evaluation of the process in the future.

5.8 Concluding Note

External evaluation in the UAE is geared towards enforcing compliance with its Standards for Licensure and Accreditation. Although viewed by some as a “one-size-fits-all” approach to quality assurance, the UAE’s current system of external quality assurance has so far served development of the nation’s tertiary education system very well. The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on the impact of external evaluation in the UAE from a technical, political, and cultural standpoint. The study has shown that accreditation impacts certain structural elements of quality in the curricular domain that are easily visible, and program accreditation can be considered successful largely. Institutions have gained benefit from the recommendations of CAA’s review teams to obtain more resources, or to realign their priorities. However, the cost-benefit ratio of preparing for accreditation is considered burdensome resulting in onerous workloads and a threat to quality teaching in classroom. It is in fact difficult to measure the quality of teaching and learning in relation to individual faculty, or the quality of graduates during the course of an accreditation review. The number of evaluations have doubled, and it is arguable if the benefits of quality assurance has decreased making it ritualistic or as pressures to be realized. These are less tangible outcomes of accreditation and perhaps the greatest challenge questioning the legitimacy of the accreditation process. On a positive note, the research indicates that accreditation has taken the lead in shaping program learning outcomes that comply with the UAE’s Qualifications Framework. The impact of this movement is clearly evident and strengthens the credibility and integrity of higher education accreditation. The choice to pursue international accreditation along with regional accreditation seems to reflect the confidence and positive outlook gained by institutions from their local review experiences, however, the burden of multiple evaluations and its impact should be further researched. The CAA’s accreditation process may require a more flexible approach to suit the needs of more mature institutions with a record of successful cycles of accreditation, or combined with other voluntary international accreditation processes to make the experience less time-consuming and more efficient for local institutions. The developmental history of tertiary education in the UAE has been very encouraging so far and its reputation for quality provision continues to attract institutions and students from around the world. Looking ahead, Quality Assurance would need to broaden its custodianship as an agent for public accountability and look beyond minimum standards to

enhance teaching and learning and in building a quality culture that is not enforced by external demands. The manner in which the CAA responds to these challenges will shape quality assurance in the UAE for years to come.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

GRADING SCALE

Score	Performance Descriptor	Interpretation of Descriptor
5	Very Good	Excellent characteristics expressed through commendations and appreciations
4	Good	No major shortcomings; indicates compliance to <i>Standards</i> without specific requirements; suggestions are aimed at improvement
3	Fair	Shortcomings indicated by Requirements and Suggestions
2	Poor	Shortcomings in important areas with Requirements asking for change
1	Very poor	Serious shortcomings calling into question the quality of the program

Detailed characteristics for each identified variable are provided in the rubric below.

Quality Rubric

- **Design of programs** (Appropriateness of program to institutional mission/ Relevance to labor market / Program Learning Outcomes/Credit Hour Requirement/ Course content/Sequencing of courses and progression/Assessment Methods)
- **Program management** (Admission requirements/ Library/ Student support /course delivery/information technology/ management of course files)
- **Teaching quality** (sufficiency of faculty/ faculty qualifications/ faculty workload/ qualifications and sufficiency of support staff)
- **Program Effectiveness** (monitoring/ improvement)

Grade descriptor	Very good 5	Good 4	Fair 3	Poor 2	Very poor 1
DESIGN OF PROGRAMS					
Appropriateness of program to institutional mission	explicit and appropriate to institutional mission; accurately described in appropriate publications and approved by the governing board and stakeholders of the institution; program generally meets criteria and goals for an internationally accepted, modern program.	clear and unambiguous; program is in alignment with institutional mission and meets <i>Standards</i> ; described in appropriate publications	relevant to institutional mission; however in-appropriately documented	appropriateness of program to the mission is not clearly articulated	irrelevant to institutional mission
Relevance to labor market	program relates to present and anticipated future employment needs; a formal advisory committee consisting of employers who provides guidance about potential enhancements to the curricula, scholarship and collaborative research.	program supports current activities of practice and industrial needs; is generally in compliance with the <i>Standards</i>	some links with industry related to student employment	fails to meet the wider needs of students and workplace requirements; lack of industry connectivity or discussion of the ways in which the program fills the needs both for students and society	Program has no currency value to the students or practice

Grade descriptor	Very good 5	Good 4	Fair 3	Poor 2	Very poor 1
Program Learning Outcomes	explicit, carefully focused, measurable and consistent with level of qualification demonstrated to be consistent with regional qualifications framework and comparable with similar international programs	clear and measurable; includes a matrix showing alignment of program outcomes with qualifications framework and in compliance with the <i>Standards</i>	appropriate, but some outcomes require clarification or are not expressed in measurable terms	ambiguous and ill-defined; not measurable; inappropriate mapping of learning outcomes to level descriptors in the qualifications framework	poorly designed program learning outcomes; confusing; no mapping to qualifications framework
Credit Hour Requirement	consistent with international practice; requirements are clearly specified in relevant publications	appropriate allocation of credit hour requirements for each segment of the program; meets requirements of the <i>Standards</i> ; specified in relevant publications	Generally satisfies minimum credit hour requirement for the level of qualification; however, lacks clarity on required minimum hours of instruction and out-of-class assignments allocated for each credit; absence of a clear statement in relevant publications	the number of credit hours required for the degree is either highly excessive, or below stipulated requirements	does not meet the credit hour requirement for the level of qualification
Course content	a substantial body of knowledge which offers breadth and depth; solid curriculum that is consistent with other international programs, and well-balanced	a body of knowledge which offers breadth and depth and is well-balanced and meets requirements of the <i>Standards</i>	generally satisfactory, but lacking in any aspects of the state of the art; some courses need revision	subject content is either out of date or lacking in breadth; needs substantial revision	subject content is irrelevant, seriously outdated or markedly lacking breadth or depth; needs total restructuring of the curriculum
Sequencing of courses and progression	coherent sequencing of subjects and subject matter; allows planned progression; conforms to international practices	sequencing of curricula is generally appropriate and allows progression; meets requirements of the <i>Standards</i>	sequencing of subject and subject content is organized to allow adequate means of progression with few noted exceptions	sequencing of the curriculum is erratic disadvantaging the learning process; progression not evident in the study plan; insufficient course time is allotted to some	sequencing of courses has not been considered logically or evaluated; progression is inhibited

Grade descriptor	Very good 5	Good 4	Fair 3	Poor 2	Very poor 1
				courses	
Assessment methods	wide range of assessment methods clearly linked to the measurement of achievement of outcomes and comparable to international practices; emphasis on assessment contributing to learning; evaluations of student performance are fair and in most cases constructive feedback is provided	a range of different assessment methods; some linkage to outcomes evident but not consistent; widely meets requirements of the <i>Standards</i>	assessment follows standard patterns; emphasis relies upon formal testing; lack of grading criteria and instructor expectations for projects and assignments; few shortcomings noted with inconsistent use of rubrics across the courses making linkage between the assessment tool and the learning outcomes not evident	assessment is traditional with an emphasis upon end of course examinations; assessment instruments used are incorrect or trivial for a higher level course; no obvious linkage to measuring achievement of learning outcomes; absence of detailed documented information concerning the assessment scheme;	assessment fails to test the performance of the students; assessment tests only lower-level skills of subject recall; no grading scales and no grading criteria included in the syllabi for any course.
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT					
Admission requirements	admission policy consistent with international best practice and included in appropriate publications; admission is very competitive and the quality of incoming students is high	Well-defined admission policy; meets requirements of the <i>Standards</i> ; admission criteria are included in appropriate publications	appropriate admission requirements; few shortcomings noted	admissions policy fails to meet requirements of the <i>Standards</i> ; lack of clarity	Unacceptable admission requirements; not stated in any publications
Library	state-of-the-art library holdings, well-resourced; evidence of continuous improvement to the collection	substantial collection of print and electronic journals; operating hours are adequate for the program; reserved budget to meet future needs; meets <i>Standards</i>	just adequate to support the programs at present; however, may not meet future needs	inadequate library holdings; absence of a library budget to meet current needs of the programs	irrelevant and outdated collection of library holdings
Information Technology	uses state-of-the-art facilities and	good use of learning management systems	no major flaws in visual aids; although adequate	little or no use made of visual aids; curriculum	no visual aids /software to support program

Grade descriptor	Very good 5	Good 4	Fair 3	Poor 2	Very poor 1
	instructional support services including the effective use of learning management systems (LMS) and instructional technologies; assesses the effectiveness of IT resources & services	(LMS), visual aids, incorporates appropriate software usage; ongoing training of faculty and staff members so that they may make skillful use of appropriate applicable software; clear policies and procedures for regular backup of information, maintaining network security, and for replacing equipment on a regular cycle	at present, would need additional specialized software in future; vaguely written policies for upgrading and replacement of equipment/software	does not make use of modern software; no written policies for the allocation of computer resources equipment or software.	delivery; no internet access
Academic advising	provide learners with a wide range of academic services; regular monitoring of student progress; assesses the academic advising process annually and uses the results for continuous improvement ; a well-functioning department with consistently high satisfaction levels	advising process that conforms to the <i>Standards</i> ; evidence of continuous assessment of advising process	guidance is appropriate to meet students' needs, but is infrequent and informal; student evaluations on advising services is not evident	quality of the advising process is doubtful due to high advisor loads or inadequate guidance documents;	Lacks evidence of any academic advising provided
Course delivery	ample evidence that consistent instruction occurs; content delivered adheres to published syllabi and weekly schedules and meet international norms	program delivery is consistent, assessments are fair , and meets requirements of <i>Standards</i> ;	program delivery is generally regarded as appropriate with a few noted exceptions	there is little evidence of effective program delivery; shortage of faculty inhibit effective instruction; location prohibits effective student and faculty interactions;	evidence of major flaws in program delivery;

Grade descriptor	Very good 5	Good 4	Fair 3	Poor 2	Very poor 1
Management of Course Files	high quality course files providing comprehensive documentary evidence and consistent with international norms; appropriate and well-organized; files used effectively in course improvement	well-organized, documentation meets minimum criteria; as required by the <i>Standards</i> ; has a clear framework on the contents and management of course files	documentation generally satisfactory, but lacking in some respects; some shortcomings in course files	course files are mostly incomplete, many shortcomings in the content ; does not meet requirements of the <i>Standards</i>	course files do not exist; no written policy
TEACHING QUALITY					
Sufficiency of faculty	sufficient number of specialist qualified faculty at appropriate ranks including productive research portfolio; faculty represents diverse cultural and educational background	overall faculty complement/ planned faculty appointments is regarded adequate for the program; faculty represents diverse cultural and educational background	current faculty number is inadequate; has a recruiting plan that details faculty needs by course and Faculty Handbook includes appropriate policy statement on faculty appointment; inability to recruit faculty of diverse cultural and educational background;	number of faculty is inadequate to run the program effectively; appoints large number of adjunct faculty to teach courses; faculty recruitment plan not included or recruitment policy is vague and/or not fit for purpose	critical shortage of faculty; huge turnovers; Teaching loads are systematically high;
Faculty Workload	workload assignments are equitable and reasonable and aligns to institutional mission and research aspirations; accounts for teaching duties, supervision of projects, internships and academic advising	workload assignments conform to policies and the <i>Standards</i> ; where overloads are essential, monetary compensation or course reduction provided;	teaching assignments are reasonably maintained; delineates a clear written policy for equitable distribution of workload; few exceptions of overload noted	teaching workload routinely exceeds limits; lack of evidence of a clear written policy on workload calculations; faculty workload plans and assignments fail to recognize instructional effort	does not meet workload policy or is in complete violation of the <i>Standards</i>

Grade descriptor	Very good 5	Good 4	Fair 3	Poor 2	Very poor 1
Faculty Qualifications	well-qualified specialist faculty having terminal degrees or equivalent and adequate teaching experience at the required level including a productive research portfolio	good academic qualifications with most having terminal degrees; specialties associated with each hire have been identified and have been correlated with curricular topics.	faculty mostly having terminal degrees with a few exceptions of those teaching courses out of specialization areas; has a plan for recruiting faculty with terminal qualifications	very few faculty with terminal qualifications, but qualifications do not match courses taught; desired specializations of the faculty not clearly articulated in terms commonly used by practitioners in the field	academic qualifications are inadequate to teach in the program; employs a large number of part-time faculty members without appropriate qualifications
Support staff	appropriate number of support staff with relevant credentials and professional training for their positions; roles and responsibilities well-defined and under periodic review	adequate number of qualified support staff ; in compliance with the <i>Standards</i>	qualified support staff, but inadequate to meet future needs	limited number of support staff; few with appropriate expertise; inadequate to meet current as well as future needs	lack of adequate support staff with suitable training; no professional development plan for improvement of skills and performance
PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS					
Monitoring	program monitoring addresses key issues and is considered exemplary in many aspects; regular monitoring of teaching quality and student evaluation is used for QA purposes; evidence that employers and other external stakeholders have been involved in developing or evaluating the curricula; a formal	Indication that program monitoring is effective ; both direct and indirect assessment measures are utilized; some monitoring of teaching and student evaluation is conducted and broadly conforms to the <i>Standards</i> / a sound plan for monitoring institutional effectiveness which incorporates appropriate measures and assessment tools to evaluate	some program monitoring is conducted; uses several methods of evaluation, however, the vast majority of methods use indirect measures	very little evidence of any meaningful program evaluation activity; monitoring is erratic	monitoring of program performance is not undertaken; monitoring of teaching or student evaluation has not been planned or implemented

Grade descriptor	Very good 5	Good 4	Fair 3	Poor 2	Very poor 1
	process of evaluating IE procedures on a regular basis.	academic programs as well as administrative operations.			
Improvement	strong evidence that results of evaluation are/ will be used to improve the institution's programs and operations;	provides some evidence of program performance; generally conforms to the <i>Standards</i> ; demonstration of a comprehensive system for assessing program effectiveness	analysis of the results of program effectiveness and an indication of changes that are required/or have occurred in the program as a result of these evaluations is absent	hardly any evidence of program improvements that have resulted from systematic evaluations; provides no indication on how program objectives and outcomes will be measured and what are the benchmarks.	fails to report any improvement to programs; absence of a system to measure program effectiveness

APPENDIX II

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



الإمارات العربية المتحدة
وزارة التربية والتعليم

March 14, 2018

To: Whom It May Concern

Reena Rajiv has the permission of the Commission for Academic Accreditation, Ministry of Education, UAE, to carry out her Doctoral Research titled "Evaluating the Impact of External Quality Assurance on UAE's Non-Federal Higher Education Institutions". Approval is given subject to the following conditions:

- Principles of good research practice is adhered to and confidentiality of data is maintained throughout the study
- Institutional identity is not disclosed in the thesis
- Privacy of participants in the research will be respected at all times
- Data collected will not be used beyond the stated goals of the research

I wish you all success in the conduct of this study.

Signed :

Professor M. Badr Aboul-Ela
Director
Commission for Academic Accreditation

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APPENDIX III

Survey-to be completed

Vice Chancellor [vc@rakmhsu.ac.ae]

To: faculty@rakmhsu.ac.ae
Cc: tamar@rakmhsu.ac.ae, Reena Rajiv

Tuesday, May 01, 2018 11:2

This message has been archived.

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings!

This is to inform you that Ms. Reena Rajiv who is from Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA, Ministry of Education) is doing her PhD work. In connection with this, she has requested us to complete a survey. The link of the survey is as below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FacultyPerspectivesontheImpactofCAA-Accreditation> <<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FacultyPerspectivesontheImpactofCAA-Accreditation>>

Approval for Research at AURAK

Ashok Kumar Kabi Satpathy [ashok.satpathy@aurak.ac.ae]

To: Reena Rajiv
Cc: Stephen Clark Wilhite [stephen.wilhite@aurak.ac.ae], Haifa Ghazi Ibrahim Awad [haifa.awad@aurak.ac.ae], Helen Amhany [HAmhany@aurak.ac.ae], Bijayalaxmi Kabisatpathy [b.kabisatpathy@aurak.ac.ae]
Attachments: @ (65 B)

Tuesday, May 08, 2018

. This message was sent with High importance.

. You forwarded this message on 5/13/2018 7:26 AM.

This message has been archived.

Dear Ms. Reena:

Your request to conduct a study at The American University of Ras Al Khaimah has been approved.

In addition to the letter of approval, please find a related institutional policy for your reference.

As is stated in the letter, Ms. Haifa in the Provost's Office will be able to provide you with necessary assistance to conduct the survey.

Should you need further assistance in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

APPENDIX IV

FW: Approval for Research at AURAK

Reena Rajiv

To: haifa.awad@aurak.ac.ae

Cc: b.kabisatpathy@aurak.ac.ae

Attachments:  @ (65 B)

Sunday, Mar 13, 2016

. This message was sent with High importance.

This message has been archived.

Dear Ms. Haifa,

Further to the below approval, would you kindly assist in sending a note to all full-time faculty members in the University's Department of Business, Department of Arts and Science (Education program) and Department of Engineering to complete a web based survey that can be accessed from: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FacultyPerspectivesontheImpactofCAA-Accreditation> <<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FacultyPerspectivesontheImpactofCAA-Accreditation>> . The survey should no

Attachments:

image001.jpg

(5 KB)

Reena Rajiv.pdf

(197 KB)

APPENDIX V

Request for further information: Faculty perspectives on CAA Accreditation

Reena Rajiv

To: vijaypaul@rakmhsu.ac.ae

Tuesday, October 30, 2018 1

This message has been archived.

Dear Prof. Samuel,

Thank you for completing the survey "Faculty Perspectives on the Impact of CAA Accreditation" earlier which was a part of my dissertation research. In your response to the survey, you agreed to be interviewed for further information. The purpose of writing to you now is to seek your opinion and further insights on the results of this survey. I would be grateful if you could either email me your answers, or let me know of a suitable date/ time that we could discuss the

APPENDIX VI

Faculty Perspectives on the Impact of CAA Accreditation

Consent Agreement

The Commission for Academic Accreditation, Ministry of Education, UAE, has permitted me to approach Non-federal Higher Education Institutions in the UAE to participate in my dissertation research. The purpose of this research is to elicit your views on the impact of CAA's accreditation process at the academic unit (curricular) level in your institution. If you have any questions/concerns about this study, please contact me at reena.rajiv@moe.gov.ae. Your identity, questions, and concerns if any, will be kept confidential. I appreciate your time and input in completing this questionnaire.

Procedure

The primary research instrument for this study is a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises of five parts. Part A requests for general information of the respondent. Statements included in Part B - E seeks your perspectives on the impact of CAA's accreditation process on Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness. Questions 27-30 seek general opinion of CAA's accreditation process.

Risks

There are no foreseeable risks to participants in answering these questions. Data collected will be used only for the purpose of this study.

Protection of Confidentiality

Responses received from participants will be strictly kept anonymous. Institutional/ personal information requested is for the purpose of contacting participants for clarification or further information. Responses will be secured and stored in the office of the researcher until after successful completion of all Doctoral Degree requirements.

* Consent Agreement: I agree to participate in this survey associated with this research project. (Please tick the box to state your agreement)

- ☐ Agree
☐ Disagree

Faculty Perspectives on the Impact of CAA Accreditation

Contact Details

Please fill in below:

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

Faculty Perspectives on the Impact of CAA Accreditation

#45

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, May 09, 2018 5:33:12 PM
Last Modified: Wednesday, May 09, 2018 5:39:21 PM
Time Spent: 00:06:08
IP Address: 94.200.93.38

Page 1:

Q1 Consent Agreement: I agree to participate in this survey associated with this research project. (Please tick the box to state your agreement) **Agree**

Page 2: Contact Details

Q2 Please fill in below: **Date** **09/05/2018**

Page 3: PART A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

Q3 1.Name of the Institution

Q4 2.Name of the Academic Unit/ College

College of Business Administration

Q5 3.How would you describe your involvement in preparing for a CAA Accreditation review? **partially involved (been a member of the steering committee or institutional team that prepared for a CAA Accreditation review; part involvement in preparation of Self-study)**

Faculty Perspectives on the Impact of CAA Accreditation

Q6 PART B: IMPACT ON PROGRAM DESIGN: The CAA's program accreditation process: (Please indicate your extent of agreement with each of the below statements by checking the box that most accurately matches your perceptions):

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 4.has helped us articulate well-defined program and course learning outcomes | Strongly Agree |
| 5.has helped align our degree programs to the UAE's National Qualifications Framework (QFEmirates) | Strongly Agree |
| 6.has ensured that our programs meet a need in society, so our graduates have a smooth transition to the labor market | Strongly Agree |
| 7.has ensured that our programs are structured in such a way that coherence is assured and that progression is made through the program | Strongly Agree |
| 8.has ensured that our programs comply with the credit hour requirement for the appropriate level of qualification | Strongly Agree |
| 9.has resulted in greater attention to usage of appropriate assessment methods of student learning | Strongly Agree |

Q7 PART C: IMPACT ON PROGRAM MANAGEMENT: The CAA's program accreditation process: (Please indicate your extent of agreement with each of the below statements by checking the box that most accurately matches your perceptions):

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 10.has ensured that our programs adhere to essential entry requirements for student admission | Strongly Agree |
| 11.has ensured that our learning environment facilitates a wide range of teaching approaches | Strongly Agree |
| 12.has ensured that we use technology for more effective teaching and learning.(e.g., the use of LMS) | Strongly Agree |
| 13.has ensured that our library is well-resourced and has a wide-range of print and electronic journals that meet current and future needs of the program | Strongly Agree |
| 14.has brought about improvements in academic support services for students (academic advising, employment support, orientation for new students) | Strongly Agree |
| 15.has ensured that we maintain high quality documentary evidence of course files that are well-organized and complete | Strongly Agree |

Faculty Perspectives on the Impact of CAA Accreditation

Q8 PART D: IMPACT ON TEACHING QUALITY: The CAA's program accreditation process: (Please indicate your extent of agreement with each of the below statements by checking the box that most accurately matches your perceptions):

16.has ensured that our faculty complement is adequate to run the program effectively	Strongly Agree
17.has resulted in increased teaching workload	Uncertain
18.has ensured that faculty with the right credentials teach in our programs	Strongly Agree
19.has ensured that our faculty complement represents members with diverse educational foci and cultural backgrounds	Strongly Agree
20.affects the quality of teaching and of our programs just during the time of the on-site visits	Uncertain

Q9 PART E: IMPACT ON PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS: The CAA's program accreditation process: (Please indicate your extent of agreement with each of the below statements by checking the box that most accurately matches your perceptions):

21.has resulted in the setting up of Internal Quality Assurance mechanisms to monitor and improve the performance of various institutional units	Strongly Agree
22.has ensured that well-designed instruments are in place to collect stakeholder feedback	Strongly Agree
23.has resulted in continuous evaluation of student support services (induction/orientation, academic advising, counseling) for their contribution to the student learning experience.	Strongly Agree
24.has resulted in QA policies and practices existing on paper only	Disagree
25.has encouraged a culture of quality monitoring to ensure accountability and compliance to facilitate improvement	Strongly Agree
26.Has ensured that our programs and services are benchmarked against best international practices	Strongly Agree

Q10 27.According to you, CAA's accreditation process has had the least (positive) impact on :

Teaching Quality

Q11 28.According to you, CAA's accreditation process has had the greatest (positive) impact on :

Teaching Quality

Q12 29.Please use this space for any comment on how the CAA's accreditation process (has/has not) impacted the quality of programs offered by your institution?

Respondent skipped this question

Q13 30.Are you in any way critical of CAA's external monitoring role?

Respondent skipped this question

Faculty Perspectives on the Impact of CAA Accreditation

Q14 31. Please indicate if you are willing to be interviewed about your experiences related to the changes you have seen in your department/institution as a result of accreditation?

Yes

Page 4: Contact Details

Q15 32. If yes, please provide your contact details:

Name

Email

Contact No.

APPENDIX VII

FACULTY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

General Questions

1. What is your role at this Institution?
2. How long have you served in that role?
3. What do you recognize as the value of CAA accreditation for your institution? Say, at the institutional level, and at the academic unit (program) level?

Focused Questions

As a reminder, the survey you completed earlier focused on 4 identified impact areas at the curricular level: Program Design, Program Management, Teaching Quality, and Program Effectiveness. The next few questions are aimed at obtaining your insights on the overall survey results:

4. The results of the survey indicate that the least positive impact of CAA accreditation was on “Teaching Quality”. In your opinion, what could be the reasons for this weak relationship between accreditation and teaching quality?
5. The highest positive impact of accreditation was noted in Program Design (particularly, alignment of program and course learning outcomes to UAE’s Qualifications Framework, and structuring and sequencing of programs), and Program Management (management of course files, and use of technology for effective teaching and learning). How would you relate these outcomes as an impact of the CAA’s accreditation process?
6. Program Effectiveness showed a positive impact- Have you seen any notable changes to the manner in which programs and services are monitored and evaluated in the institution? Have these changes actually resulted in program improvement?
7. Do the Quality Assurance/ Institutional Effectiveness Unit at your institution share the results of quality assessment/evaluation with faculty? Is yes, is this information helpful? Has it enabled you to make any positive changes to the curriculum/ related services?
8. In your opinion, is there an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about continuous improvement of programs, student learning, etc., at your institution, or would you say that quality assurance has remained a paper exercise to satisfy accreditation requirements?

APPENDIX VIII

Impact of External Evaluation on Institutional Quality Culture- QA Staff Perspectives

Impact of External Evaluation on Institutional Quality Culture- QA Staff Perspectives

#18

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Sunday, May 06, 2018 2:46:43 PM
Last Modified: Sunday, May 06, 2018 3:27:13 PM
Time Spent: 00:40:30
IP Address: 80.227.100.61

Page 1

Q1 Consent Agreement: I agree to participate in this survey associated with this research project. (Please tick the box to state your agreement) **Agree**

Q2 Please fill in below: **Date** **05/06/2018**

Page 2: PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION:

Q3 3.Name of the Institution

American University in Dubai

Q4 2.Year of establishment of the Institution **Prior to 2000**

Q5 3.Name of the Representative completing this survey (optional)

Q6 4.Are you: **Director of IE department**

Page 3: PART B: STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF QA UNIT

Q7 5.When did your institution introduce a QA system (or equivalent)? **Prior to 2000**

100 / 222

Impact of External Evaluation on Institutional Quality Culture- QA Staff Perspectives

Q8 6.How did you introduce the QA system? Please choose all applicable options

- ☐ Decision taken by senior leadership- the concept, training, and support was provided for its implementation
- ☐ A requirement in the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation has been a precursor to building our system of internal quality assurance
- ☐ Decision was the outcome of various consultation rounds among academic staff (faculty) of the institution
- ☐ Decision was the outcome of various joint consultation rounds among academic and administrative staff of the institution
- ☐ Other (please specify):
As a result of membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

Q9 7.What kind of structure do you have in place to support the Internal Quality Assurance processes at your institution? Please choose all applicable options

- ☐ The QA Unit reports directly to the CEO
- ☐ The QA unit is headed by a Director of Quality Assurance
- ☐ There is a centralized QA Unit with adequate, specialized staff
- ☐ There are contact persons in charge of QA within colleges/departments, who also have other responsibilities
- ☐ There is an institutional level quality committee or equivalent
- ☐ There are college level and/or department and/or program level quality committees or equivalent

Q10 8.How is your QA architecture designed? Please choose one:

- ☐ It incorporates best practices from different models and merges them to suit accreditation requirements

Impact of External Evaluation on Institutional Quality Culture- QA Staff Perspectives

Q11 9.Which activities are covered by your institutional quality assurance processes? Please choose all applicable options

Monitoring implementation of Strategic Plan

Research,

Other (please specify):

Monitoring of program level outcome assessment and adherence to accreditation standards. Also handling of the student complaint system

Q12 10.Do you have an institutional strategic plan (or equivalent)?

Yes

Q13 11.How does your internal evaluation process provide feedback to the strategic planning in place? Please choose all applicable options.

The institutional leadership evaluates annually the progress made in terms of achieving the goals set by the institution

,

The colleges (and/or relevant units) conduct regular self-evaluations to analyze their contribution to the achievement of institutional strategic goals

,

The institution conducts regular surveys among the members of the institutional community (staff and students) to analyze their perception of the institutional strategy and its implementation at grass-roots level

,

The institution has defined a set of key performance indicators and follows its progress based on them

,

The institutional strategy and the achievement of the goals set in it are revisited when the document is revised (every 'N' years)

Q14 12.Does your institution have a comprehensive Quality Assurance/Institutional Effectiveness Manual that describes the structure and functions of the QA processes in your institution?

Yes

Q15 13.Does your institution have a process to review the Quality Assurance system itself (manual, processes, and instruments)?

Yes

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Q16 If yes, who is involved in such review?

IE Office with input from other academic and administrative divisions.

<p>Q17 14.What activities does your institution engage in to gather evidence about the effectiveness of its quality assurance processes? (choose all applicable)</p>	<p>Trans-institutional benchmarking (Benchmark current processes against peer institutions)</p> <p>,</p> <p>Internal benchmarking (Performance benchmarking against own KPIs)</p> <p>,</p> <p>Evidence collected through internal self-evaluative surveys</p> <p>,</p> <p>Use of performance metrics such as balanced-score card</p> <p>,</p> <p>Other (please specify):</p> <p>Advisory boards</p>
<p>Q18 15.Benchmarking in your institution is used : (choose all applicable options):</p>	<p>To introduce curriculum reforms,</p> <p>To inform strategic decision making</p> <p>To improve institutional performance through inter-organizational learning</p> <p>,</p> <p>To improve institutional competitiveness, as a data gathering and reporting tool to meet accreditation requirements</p> <p>,</p> <p>Other (please specify):</p> <p>To improve institutional ranking within the UAE and the Arab World.</p>
<p>Q19 16.In your opinion, how compatible is your institution's internal quality assurance structure/ processes with regard to external quality assurance requirements of the Commission for Academic Accreditation? (Choose only one)</p>	<p>fully compatible (a commendable QA system which is in complete compliance with CAA's Standards as well as other international accrediting agencies)</p>
<p>Q20 17.How does the process for designing program curriculum work within your institution? Please choose one. If there are several kinds of processes in place in your institutions, please choose the most commonly used.</p>	<p>It is usually a combination of the above strategies with faculty being key participants</p>

Impact of External Evaluation on Institutional Quality Culture- QA Staff Perspectives

Q21 18.Please identify which people are involved in preparing the curriculum and programs in your institution (Choose all applicable options)

Students,
Faculty,
Administrative staff members,
External Stakeholders (employers, consultants, corporate partners),
Alumni

Q22 19.How often are program contents, pedagogical approaches, and learning outcomes evaluated? Choose all applicable options

The curriculum and program contents, pedagogical approaches and intended learning outcomes are evaluated on a regular basis through the IE/QA system
,
The curriculum and program contents, pedagogical approaches and intended learning outcomes are evaluated as part of an external accreditation process or equivalent
,
The effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the curriculum and program processes are evaluated at a regular cycle (every "n" years according to degree completion period)
,
The curriculum and program contents are evaluated continuously at an informal level (discussions between faculty members, staff and students)
,
Other (please specify):
Annually through an Outcome Assessment Report and Plan

Q23 20.What instruments are commonly used to gather evidence about the effectiveness of programs and related services?

Student evaluations,
Surveys,
Assessment data,
Annual reports of unit/program operational plans

Impact of External Evaluation on Institutional Quality Culture- QA Staff Perspectives

Q24 21.What kind of data does the institution collect about the effectiveness of its programs and services? Please choose all applicable options

Student progression and success rates
Teacher-student ratio per college/department,
Alumni and employer satisfaction survey
Employment rate of graduates
Students' satisfaction with their programs
Student profile (age, gender, educational background, socio-cultural background, etc.)
Available learning resources and, when applicable, their costs
Other (please specify):
Operational effectiveness reports and External Review feedback

Q25 22.Is the data analyzed and interpreted for easy understanding by relevant departments?

Yes

Page 7

Q26 23.Who analyzes the data?

QA unit

Q27 24.Do you share the results of the data with senior management and/or concerned departments/ individuals?

Yes

Q28 25.To what extent does your institution use such data for planning?

To improve teaching and learning
To improve services offered to students
To satisfy accreditation requirements,
Other (please specify):
to improve professional practices

Q29 26.Does your institution engage in an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about continuous improvement of academic programs, student learning, and institutional processes with relevant stakeholders?

Yes

Impact of External Evaluation on Institutional Quality Culture- QA Staff Perspectives

Q30 27.Do you think that CAA's monitoring role has positively impacted the manner in which your institution assures the quality of education? **Yes**

Q31 28.According to you, CAA's accreditation process

Has had the greatest positive impact on: **program and faculty quality**

And the least positive impact on: **program development and growth**

Q32 29.Are you in anyway critical of the external pressure exerted by the CAA? Explain.

We do not view the CAA's work as external pressure, but rather a support mechanism to improve institutional quality

Q33 30.Please indicate if you are willing to be interviewed about your experiences related to the cultural changes you have seen in your institution as a result of accreditation? **Yes**

Page 8

Q34 31.If yes, please provide your contact details:

Name

Email

Contact No

APPENDIX IX

Interview Protocol- QA Staff

Appendix I: Interview Protocol

Subject Name:
Phone or E-mail:
Location:
Date and Time:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The interview will take no more than 20-25 minutes. Any information you share with me today will be part of my doctoral dissertation study, which is approved by the IRB of the British University in Dubai, and by the Commission for Academic Accreditation, Ministry of Education, UAE. Information will not be shared with anyone else, and I can assure you that any personal details (institution/ interviewee names) will not be disclosed in the thesis. So, I appreciate your honest opinions on the subject. With your permission, I would like to record our conversation- Is that Ok with you?

I shall transcribe the interview, send you the draft by email, and seek your approval before including it in the study. The (recording) and detailed transcripts will be erased as soon as I defend my thesis.

Research Question:

Has accreditation resulted in consequential changes to an institution's internal quality culture?

The purpose of this interview is to evaluate if CAA's external evaluation has had an impact on the quality assurance practices of your institution and consequently resulted in the creation of an internal quality culture. For the purpose of this study, "Quality Culture" is viewed from two dimensions: a structural dimension; and second, the characteristics of embedded institutional effectiveness practices in your institution which demonstrates a cultural dimension.

II. Biographical information about the participant

1. How long have you been at the University/ College in total?
2. What is your role at the University/ College?
3. In a sentence or two, how would you describe your experience of the CAA's Accreditation process?

Possible probes (used when needed):

- a. What did you mean by...?
- b. Could you give me an example...?
- d. How did things change after accreditation...?

Awareness: Implementation of a quality assurance or quality management program can fail if the members of the institution are not aware of how the program works and what aspects of quality are important.

4. How did you (your institution) communicate the implementation of the Quality Assurance system to all members of the institution?
5. To what extent do you think they understood and embraced the notion of quality assurance? (For example, is there an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about continuous improvement of programs, student learning, etc., or has it remained a paper exercise to satisfy accreditation requirements?)

Mechanisms:

1. Because the focus of this study is at the academic unit level, can you tell me what kinds of quality assessment/ evaluation tools (direct/ indirect) are used to determine the effectiveness of your academic programs and services?
2. What was the range of involvement of the following institutional representatives in the quality assessment process?

Faculty/ QA Staff/ Leadership/ Administrative Staff/ Students

3. Did the quality assessment process involve any external individuals from outside the institution? (Standard 2.2.4 - involves advisory panels and international practitioners in its planning, where appropriate)

Outcomes:

1. Was the data collected from a quality evaluation/assessment process analyzed and interpreted in a form that was easily understandable by relevant parties?
2. What procedure do you follow to share the results of the data with senior management and/or concerned departments/ individuals? (Do you use an electronic system such as dash-board, give a presentation, or provide them printed reports?)
3. Have the results of this data been used to make any improvements to programs/ services? (probe: can you give me an example?)
4. What was the role of the QA unit in developing the improvement plans?
5. Have you established any follow-up measures to determine if improvements have actually taken place? Is there a time-frame when follow-ups are done?
6. Finally, do you think that CAA's role as an external evaluator has contributed in any way to building a culture of effectiveness?

V. Follow-up

A. Would it be alright for me to call you if I need any additional information?

B. As a reminder, I will mail you a copy of your interview transcript. I will ask you to verify the information, and if needed, mail me any corrections. Thank you for being a part of my research!

END OF INTERVIEW

APPENDIX X

PILOT STUDY RELIABILITY ANALYSIS- CRONBACH'S ALPHA

Table 1: Reliability Analysis- Full Scale

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.774	24

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PE_helped setting-up IQA mechanisms	4.35	.587	20
PE_Well-designed IQA instruments to collect stakeholder feedback	4.25	.550	20
PE_Continuous evaluation of student support services	4.20	.523	20
PE_QA exists on paper only	2.25	1.251	20
PE_Encouraged culture of quality monitoring	4.15	.671	20
PE_Programs are benchmarked against best Intl practices	4.40	.598	20
PD_Helped articulate well-defined program and course learning outcomes	4.45	.510	20
PD_Helped align programs to QFE	4.65	.587	20
PD_Programs meet a need in society	4.30	.470	20
PD_Has rarely impacted the design,content and rigor	2.20	.951	20
PD_Coherence is assured	4.20	.523	20
PD_Comply with credit-hour requirement	4.60	.503	20
PD_Use of appropriate assessment methods	4.25	.550	20
PM_Adherence to entry requirements for admission	4.15	.489	20

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PE_helped setting-up IQA mechanisms	89.55	40.576	.171	.774
PE_Well-designed IQA instruments to collect stakeholder feedback	89.65	39.713	.315	.767
PE_Continuous evaluation of student support services	89.70	39.589	.355	.765
PE_QA exists on paper only	91.65	39.082	.099	.796
PE_Encouraged culture of quality monitoring	89.75	38.197	.428	.760
PE_Programs are benchmarked against best Intl practices	89.50	38.474	.454	.759
PD_Helped articulate well-defined program and course learning outcomes	89.45	38.155	.600	.754
PD_Helped align programs to QFE	89.25	38.197	.504	.757
PD_Programs meet a need in society	89.60	37.621	.756	.749
PD_Has rarely impacted the design,content and rigor	91.70	42.116	-.066	.798
PD_Coherence is assured	89.70	40.537	.209	.772
PD_Comply with credit-hour requirement	89.30	40.116	.288	.768
PD_Use of appropriate assessment methods	89.65	37.397	.669	.750

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PM_Adherence to entry requirements for admission	89.75	39.039	.478	.760
PM_Facilitates wide-range of teaching approaches	89.75	38.092	.519	.756
PM_Use technology for effective teaching and learning	89.60	39.200	.235	.772
PM_Library is well-resourced	89.75	38.829	.303	.767
PM_Improvements in academic support services	89.85	40.976	.111	.777
PM_Documentary evidence of course files	89.35	38.555	.534	.757
TQ_Faculty complement is adequate	89.70	37.168	.620	.750
TQ_Increased teaching workload	91.50	37.842	.300	.769
TQ_Faculty with right credentials teach	89.80	39.432	.355	.765
TQ_Faculty diversity	90.00	41.263	.064	.780
TQ_Affects quality of teching during accreditation visits only	92.20	39.116	.244	.772

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
93.90	42.200	6.496	24

Table 2: Reliability Analysis- Component 1: Program Design**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.444	7

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PD_Helped articulate well-defined program and course learning outcomes	4.45	.510	20
PD_Helped align programs to QFE	4.65	.587	20
PD_Programs meet a need in society	4.30	.470	20
PD_Has rarely impacted the design,content and rigor	2.20	.951	20
PD_Coherence is assured	4.20	.523	20
PD_Comply with credit-hour requirement	4.60	.503	20
PD_Use of appropriate assessment methods	4.25	.550	20

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PD_Helped articulate well-defined program and course learning outcomes	24.20	3.011	.487	.283
PD_Helped align programs to QFE	24.00	3.158	.303	.358
PD_Programs meet a need in society	24.35	2.766	.734	.185

PD_Has rarely impacted the design,content and rigor	26.45	4.261	-.263	.734
PD_Coherence is assured	24.45	3.839	.010	.485
PD_Comply with credit-hour requirement	24.05	3.313	.311	.364
PD_Use of appropriate assessment methods	24.40	2.884	.507	.261

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
28.65	4.134	2.033	7

Table 3: Reliability Analysis- Component 2: Program Management

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.745	6

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PM_Adherence to entry requirements for admission	4.15	.489	20
PM_Facilitates wide-range of teaching approaches	4.15	.587	20
PM_Use technology for effective teaching and learning	4.30	.801	20
PM_Library is well-resourced	4.15	.745	20
PM_Improvements in academic support services	4.05	.605	20
PM_Documentary evidence of course files	4.55	.510	20

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PM_Adherence to entry requirements for admission	21.20	5.432	.295	.751
PM_Facilitates wide-range of teaching approaches	21.20	4.800	.466	.713
PM_Use technology for effective teaching and learning	21.05	3.945	.552	.690
PM_Library is well-resourced	21.20	4.063	.575	.680
PM_Improvements in academic support services	21.30	4.432	.608	.674
PM_Documentary evidence of course files	20.80	5.116	.419	.725

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
25.35	6.345	2.519	6

Table 4: Reliability Analysis- Component 3: Teaching Quality

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.560	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted

TQ_Faculty complement is adequate	12.10	3.463	.395	.470
TQ_Increased teaching workload	13.90	3.042	.250	.572
TQ_Faculty with right credentials teach	12.20	3.853	.272	.532
TQ_Faculty diversity	12.40	3.832	.201	.564
TQ_Affects quality of teching during accreditation visits only	14.60	2.674	.546	.346

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
TQ_Faculty complement is adequate	12.10	3.463	.395	.470
TQ_Increased teaching workload	13.90	3.042	.250	.572
TQ_Faculty with right credentials teach	12.20	3.853	.272	.532
TQ_Faculty diversity	12.40	3.832	.201	.564
TQ_Affects quality of teching during accreditation visits only	14.60	2.674	.546	.346

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
16.30	4.747	2.179	5

Table 5: Reliability Analysis- Component 4: Program Effectiveness

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.588	6

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PE_helped setting-up IQA mechanisms	4.35	.587	20
PE_Well-designed IQA instruments to collect stakeholder feedback	4.25	.550	20
PE_Continuous evaluation of student support services	4.20	.523	20
PE_QA exists on paper only	2.25	1.251	20
PE_Encouraged culture of quality monitoring	4.15	.671	20
PE_Programs are benchmarked against best Intl practices	4.40	.598	20

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PE_helped setting-up IQA mechanisms	19.25	5.039	.409	.518
PE_Well-designed IQA instruments to collect stakeholder feedback	19.35	5.082	.435	.514
PE_Continuous evaluation of student support services	19.40	4.674	.670	.442
PE_QA exists on paper only	21.35	4.345	.106	.753
PE_Encouraged culture of quality monitoring	19.45	4.366	.588	.436
PE_Programs are benchmarked against best Intl practices	19.20	5.642	.163	.599

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
23.60	6.463	2.542	6

APPENDIX XI

From: Dr.Dawit Teklu
Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2017 2:10 PM
To: Reena Rajiv
Subject: RE: Need your opinion- My study
Attachments: Rubrics with DT comments.docx

Hi Reena

You are almost there. My comments are attached. Let me know if I can be of assistance.
Looking forward to reading the dissertation.

Good Luck

Dawit

From: Reena Rajiv
Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2017 1:04 PM
To: Dr Bruce Taylor; Javaid Laghari; Dr.Dawit Teklu
Subject: Need your opinion- My study

Dear Dr Bruce, Dr Dawit & Dr Javaid,

As mentioned to you earlier, The title of my EdD research is "Evaluating the effectiveness of external quality assurance on the quality of higher education in UAE's non-federal institutions". The empirical focus of the study is to capture the effectiveness of accreditation at the curricular level, i.e., on institutional organization of teaching and learning. The methodology proposed in Phase I of the study is a meta-analysis of ERT Reports of those programs that have undergone at least 2 cycles of program accreditation reviews (sample size- 80). I have identified key variables from the ERT Reports that pertain to the curricular domain. I also developed a "quality rubric" that will be used to assign a rating/weightage to each identified variable. The rubric is attached with this email. The grading scale includes an interpretation of the descriptor, and the rubric has detailed characteristics for each of the identified variables.

I am writing now to seek your views/ comments on the following:

1. Is the grading scale appropriate?
2. Does the quality rubric cover all important segments/variables that would guide the proposed evaluative study?
3. Do you recommend that any of the segments/variables be excluded from the rubric as it will not relay appropriate information, or is beyond the scope of the study?
4. Do you have any suggestions to improve the quality rubric or description of characteristics listed for each scale?

Appreciate your response at the earliest.

Regards,
Reena

APPENDIX XII

Mapping of Quality Rubric Segments to Different Versions of the Standards

Evaluation Segments	Standards 2007	Standards 2011
1. Design of programs	Standards 1 and 3	Standard 3
Relevance	Section 1-A (needs assessment), Appendix A-IX	3.1.1
Objectives	Section 1-B	3.1.3
Content	Section 3-B, Appendix A-X	3.2.1
Sequencing and progression	Section 3-B	3.2.1/ 3.3.5
Assessment methods	Appendix A- III	3.3.4
2.Course Management	Standard 5, Appendices	Standards 3, and 5
admission/graduation requirements	Section 5-A, Appendix A-III	5.2 (UG) & 5.3(G)
course delivery, course files	Appendix A-X, Appendix A-I (5)	3.8
Management of student assessments	Section 5-E,	5.7
Student support services	Appendix AI- 5 (not very explicit)	5.8, 5.9
3.Teaching quality	Standard 4 , Appendices	Standard 4
sufficiency of faculty	Appendix A-I (4)	4.9
qualifications	Appendix A-I(4)	4.4
Research/ Professional Development	Appendix A-I(4), Section 10-B	4.8
Sufficiency of Support staff	Section 4; Appendix A-I(4)	4
4.Quality Assurance and program effectiveness	Standard 1	Standards 2 and 3
Program & teaching quality monitoring	1.4, 1.5, Appendix A- II	2.1, 3.10