



Effect of Accreditation on Improvement and Promotion of Education and Training Process

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, one of the most important perturbations of the organizations is to improve the quality, which is on the apex of the other matters. Continuous improvement of the education quality is subject to continuous assessment and accreditation. Education accreditation may reform the structures and the current educational processes, and may help the qualitative improvement of the organizational working, and as a result, it may provide a ground for meeting the needs proposed. Identification of the educational accreditation may be considered as an effective basis for assessment of the rate of the attention of the educational centers to compliance with the necessary standards. Upon clarification of the information, the organization will make sure that such programs and plans would be assessed in conformity with the accurate and appropriate criteria of the educational purposes. Case study of the papers and analysis the studies from the year 1999 through 2014 in the field of educational quality and accreditation have been examined and studies. Such a case study indicates that the accreditation system is a voluntary system to guarantee the standardization and internationalization of the education systems. In consideration of the importance of education, paying attention to the quality is very important. In educational system of our country, accreditation may cause an innovation in line with promotion of the educational quality in our country.

Keywords: Accreditation, Assessment, Supervision, Quality, Standardization

INTRODUCTION

In consideration of the scientific challenges, speed of technology changes and increase in the educational expenses to be in agreement with the innovations and to meet the social and economic needs, the knowledge is necessary together with proper professions. Accreditation methods within the international scale and development of the scientific services in the field of world economy are the most important issues of the nations and strengthening the mutual relations between such nations. Reconnaissance of the strength and weak points, identification of the opportunities and threats and effort for recovery of the existing status and reaching a desirable status and achievement of the superior place are the most important duties of the organizations. Continuous improvement and mend of the quality is subject to the continuous assessment. At present, the quality is alive and discussable throughout the world, more important than any other time, and the accreditation methods are very serious and debatable matters [1]. Most of the developing countries have not had any distinct assessment or appropriate accreditation systems for education, and being far from such systems and not being online in the developing countries has caused problems in such countries, which has caused such countries to need refresher educational courses and accreditation of education in public and private institutions, legal firms, foreign organizations and virtual institutes [2]. For assessment of the function of the educational system, the operational criteria, standards and indexes are needed; all of them give the organization the accreditation concept and meaning [3]. Accreditation, as one of the most well-known patterns of quality assessment, is an effective basis for assessment of the degree of attention of the educational centers to comply with the necessary standards, and by clarifying the issues, may assure for the organization that the plans and programs go ahead in accordance with the prearranged criteria. It is expected that, under the existing conditions and conformity of the same with the desirable status, the targets and standards should be taken into consideration, the in conformities should be distinguished and action should be taken in order to seek a solution for such problems [4].

Importance of Subject

For reaching the internationalization trend and development of the technology, the need for education is required and the international economy is subject to high quality education. Without reengineering and existence of accreditation, the investment on human resources and economic resources may not be possible. Increase in the educational capitals requires having knowledge, skill, power, motive, sense of duty and tendency to change, necessary awareness and public partnership, which cause lower expenses of productivity and achievement of effectiveness targets of the organization. Pauses in administrative services, prolongation of the accreditation process, anxiety about the methods of quality assurance and increase in the growth of the virtual systems, has caused worry about the accurate trend of the educational accreditation [2]. Continuous accreditation in due course may cause continuous improvement of the educational processes and permanence of educational management quality, and as a result, it may cause education's self-government. As a rule, direction of accreditation process has a positive effect on the cycles of programming, planning, execution control and feedback, which cause continuous betterment of the programs, plans and targets of the educational systems and the universities [5].

Reasons of Need for Creation of Practical Strategy and Educational Accreditation

- To get results related to the values
- To increase the capability of human resources capacities of each zone
- To reduce the expenses; to reach the goals
- To decrease the mistaken information; to capture more information in less time
- To reduce the operational expenses
- To increase the inter-person trust, beneficiaries collaboration and persons partnership [5].

Accreditation means systematic assessment under clear-cut standards. Standards which emphasize on continuous improvement of the quality, security and reassurance of the thought-based educations. Focusing on the fundamental principles for integration of the educational system development forms the basis of accreditation [6]. Accreditation model as one of the most reputable models of qualitative assessment on the quality, and upon enjoyment of the international acceptability and in harmony with educational accreditation standards is a new way for making sure of the appropriate operation and function. Getting knowledge about the accreditation approaches will help us to correctly understand the nature and modality of application of accreditation. We hope the causes of qualitative promotion and effectiveness of education and educational services will be provided in the country by execution of the accreditation standards in the shortest time.

Concept of Accreditation

On conceptual basis, the word ACCREDITATION has derived from the word ACCREDIT which means Credit With. In thesaurus in general meaning, this word means to give credit to a complex which is subject to some standards which is accomplished by the local society.

Special Concept of Accreditation

Process of control and assessment of advancement of the program of an institute or effectiveness of advancement and progress on the basis of the prearranged and standard criteria; a process through which an organization or institute distinguishes that the programs and educations are of prearranged or standard conditions or not [7].

Audit, assessment and accreditation are a process which may be applied for judgment and quality and includes the following three parts:

- To judge the suitability of the programs and the methods designed for the research on the targets expressed
- To compare the activities performed with the programs and plans executed
- To judge the effectiveness of the activities toward materialization of the targets expressed [8].

Definition of Accreditation Council of Higher Education of the United States of America (CHEA: Council of Higher Education)

Process designed and based on self-assessment and public assessment, for quality assurance of the institute or the educational course, with the target of quality promotion, replying and determining this matter that if this institute or program/ plan in question has provided the standards published by the relevant accreditation organization or its calling and purposes or not [7].

Aldman (1992) expresses Accreditation as a quality control process and sureness in education, by which he has engaged in inspection and assessment for making sure of having the minimum standards. Appropriate and trustworthy accreditation causes public trust [9]. Accreditation in higher education depends on the process of quality control in the institutes and higher education centers and universities, on the job educational courses and obtaining the educational qualifications in accordance with the acceptable academic and professional standards [6]. Accreditation Law means introduction to an apparatus for training the innovation, especially innovation in education and training [5]. Educational

programs should be in accordance with the standards, and the qualified persons and the persons who have knowledge and basis skill, power and personal and professional characteristics should proceed to plan [10].

Consequences of Growth and Qualitative Development of Education in Iran and Necessitude of Quality and Accreditation

Qualitative growth trend in Higher Education of Iran has had outspread consequences during the recent years. The first consequence is popularization, communism and declining the reputation and place of the university. The second important effect is to swallow the credits, reputations, direct helps and indirect aids of the government to the extremely developed sections of education and student services, which, by nature, includes decrease in the ability of qualitative research and education. The third consequence is the decrease of the power of the universities in arena of international scientific competitions. In such conditions, one of the most basic challenges of the Iranian universities, is not only losing the essential part in production of science and thought, but also decrease in scientific legitimacy and authority is a consequence through its continuation, giving away such legitimacy is not unpredictable [11].

Record

In the United States of America, in the late 1800, Accreditation was applied by National and Local Agencies and in Boston University in order to compare the universities, and in the year 1906, Carnegie Corporation brought forward standards about insurance, budget and retirement, which became intense in medicine and law in order to develop the willingness to accept responsibility and answering in the year 1960. In the year 1985, National Accreditation Committee was established in France with 2 targets and marks. Valid judgment on the basis of the legal power regarding the quality or research and education and judgment on the modality of the method through which the university was established to perform the responsibility. In England, until the year 1991, Accreditation was the responsibility of National Council of Scientific Validities, then, 2 patterns were applied for polytechnic and colleges. In the Netherlands, there is an Internal Self-assessment System. In Sweden, Accreditation has been the duty of the scientific mission and faculty of the universities and they asked for help from the board of trustees for the purpose of qualitative promotion. In Rumania, Accreditation may be done for the purpose of assessment of the skills of the institutes for comparison of the same with other centers. In Canada, self-assessment and meetings may be accomplished by the peers and counterparts. In Korea, colleges and councils do accreditation for institutional education and self-assessment. In Hong Kong, Accreditation Council may be formed as a committee of expert persons. In Iran, the first effort was made for assessment in the year 1996. In Iran, under the influence of such international trends, especially coming the populous and social changes into view, i.e. expeditious growth of population, the young age-wise composition of the society, increase in demand for access to the secondary education and higher education and also intense attitude of the women for entering into the universities and higher education system of Iran was developed hard and extremely. Internal assessment for promotion of the quality of medical education and then, the agriculture and architecture groups caused internal assessment [8]. National education in the recent 20 years with qualitative respect has been considerably developed. But, its quality promotion requires application of assessment and accreditation of the educations, for which less researches have been made in Iran, but the nearest search to this research is the research of Mr. Saeed Hodavand in the year 2010 entitled "Accreditation; Device of quality Control of Education" [12].

Specifications of Accreditation

The most important specifications of Accreditation are as follows:

- To facilitate the knowledge and science publication
- To improve the activities, continuously; to accept commitment and obligation
- To increase productivity and decrease the operational expenses
- To spend the time, on an optimum basis
- To access the comprehensive and adequate information of the accreditation specifications of educational system, on a quick basis

Accreditation may make the bilateral communication and vast view, merit, truth in accurate analysis of the information possible. Appropriate planning of the curriculum and educational program, support, protection and quick and simple assessment, equality, making capacity and surety of the educational quality, which are in the process of execution and implementation in more than 60 universities [13]. Accreditation model is a reference for other assessment models under approach of comprehensive quality management [14]. Centralized planning, continuous assessment and support of the human resources are the guidelines of accreditation [15]. Awareness of the education targets and appropriate design and planning of the educational programs and preparedness of the researchers, may be considered as the ways of ascertaining from the results of the educational programs. Education under high level standards may increase professional success, professional worthiness, increasing the responsibility, effective leadership

and compatibility with various cultures in the place of work within international level, comparison of the operation with growth of effective professional learning, having professional responsibility in comparison with the moral and environmental values. From among the consequences of appropriate accreditation we may name diversity in culture, identification of demand, identification of skills, getting a chance for florescence and prosperity, creativity and innovation, increase in the accuracy and concentration, improvement of communicative skills [6].

Accreditation Aims and Goals

- Access of the universities and educational centers to the level of official standard
- Qualitative promotion
- Help to identify the more appropriate institutes for making investment in private sector
- Support and protection of the institutes against the internal and external hustles
- Determination of the criteria for desert of the universities in order to issue specialized certificates and licenses and qualitative promotion of the courses and programs

Assessment Pattern of Accreditation

1. Self-assessment (internal assessment) is the initial process of accreditation. In order to look himself in the mirror, he proceeds to assess himself, to find out his strong and weak points, so that he may deal with his weaknesses [16].
2. External assessment may be fulfilled by the external experts or the public board. External assessment completes the internal assessment. Such kind of assessment is appropriate for the purpose of the end destinations, examination of the financial issues and replying against the allocation of funds [7]. The process of accreditation may be performed through examination and assessment of the programs and plans of the institutes and centers for making sure of obtaining the minimum level of the acceptable standards.

Accreditation Model includes:

1. Quality-based external organizational assessment increases the organizational commitment to promote the quality.
2. Methods which may assist the quality management in the organization

By simultaneous and harmonious exploitation and utilization of both models, the educational system tries to increase the power of the organizations in order to render safe, qualitative and current scientific evidence-based services and the native conditions of the country, on the one hand, and by external assessment of the organization, emphasizes on the commitment and answerableness of the organizations on the basis of the clear and ipsilateral standards, on the other hand.

Important points in accreditation are as follows:

- 1) In accreditation process, the national and provincial accreditation groups should recognize officially and support the accreditation process in cooperation with the faculty members throughout the country.
- 2) For support of the organizational diversity and independence of the universities, the accreditation representatives or agents should not impose the syllabuses and assessment patters on the higher education institutes, under any special educational method.
- 3) Accreditation should be a process, through which the plans, programs, facilities, faculty members and the managers would be assessed for the purpose of support of the learning opportunities for the students [17].

Levels of Macro and Micro Assessment Indexes of Accreditation

- General section (qualitative and quantitative indexes and education analysis)
- Education section (qualitative, quantitative and analytical indexes for the faculty members, programs, plans, educational environment and educational experts)
- Research section (in connection with the research centers, researchers, research publications, conferences and congresses)
- Researchers section (in connection with the graduates and students)
- Cultural section (extracurricular activities and cultural programs)

Credits and facilities section are in connection with allocation of funds and budget [18]. Application of the suggestions and criticisms, poll of the students will be conducted through educational refining. For the purpose of improvement of the educational programs and plans, it is necessary to offer consultation services to the research institutes. In consideration of the report and self-assessments performed in each institute and organization, the time scale for reaccreditation may be at least once a three-month [6]. In international normal effectiveness pattern (within the international scale), the criterion for assessment of accreditation may be the international standards in higher education. Conformity of the international standards of higher education for most of the universities of our country may be considered as an important matter, because, the strategic conditions of higher education in each country depend on the

social, economic, cultural and political conditions of that country. Application of ISO patterns in higher education may remain within the framework of such a pattern. Nowadays, one of the higher education programs/ plans in the world is examination of the trend of educational quality [19]. For the purpose of promotion of the quality, certainty and assurance of the services, it is necessary to present the official educational certificates or authorizations [1]. Process on the basis of self-assessment and public assessment to assure the quality of the institute or the educational courses with the target of quality promotion, replying and determining this matter that, if the educational programs in question have been designed to provide the standards published by the related accreditation organization and also their vocations and targets or not. Interrelation of validation is presented with 4 classes: quality and validation, approaches and efficiencies, components and indexes of validation, and identification of some existing opportunities and threats (menaces).

Quality and Education

Chapman (1999) believes that the quality is equal to the educational standard and is like the level of progress and advancement of the learners. Such a definition from the quality, completely agrees with the concentration resulted on the learners' learning. Alkyne knows that the educational quality is arisen from the quality of comprehensive operation, teaching of the teachers and allocation of the resources. Quality resources in education include the strong and targeted organizational values, prominent instructors, appropriate educational centers, identification of the learners' capabilities, arrangement of the appropriate educational courses or a combination of such cases [14 & 12].

Validation and Quality

Sallis 1993, introduces 5 necessities for organization sublimity and loftiness as: strategic planning, validation for loftiness, cooperation leadership, making the personnel as partners and necessity to comply with the standards, and deems their materialization in continuous assessment of the quality of the processes.

Validation as an Assessment System includes the following main elements:

1. Mechanism which is administrator of the periodic assessments
2. Standards and, probably, compiled and written devices which may be applied for assessment
3. Predetermined time schedule (for instance once a two-year) for assessment
4. Respecting the experts' opinions to judge the operational and functional quality of the center subject matter of assessment
5. Effect on the status of the center subject matter of assessment, on the basis of the results arisen from the assessment conducted [12].

Mentioned elements may help to reveal the various aspects of the quality of the education center (input, process, output and consequence), to assist the center for auto-regulation, to associate of the engaged factors in clarification of the issues and empowering the same in meeting the needs of the organization.

Following factors may be effective basis for the primary assessment of the education center:

- Organizational place/ organizing and management- educational courses held and executed
- Teaching process- graduates learning

Working and Operational Importance of Validation of Education and Training Centers

- ❖ To approve qualification of the education and training center
- ❖ To distinguish the credits and reputations
- ❖ To answer the related authorities against the credits raised
- ❖ To reveal the rate of access to the prearranged targets
- ❖ To supply and present the information for the awareness of the relevant learners and pupils (related and beneficiary) regarding the function of educational system
- ❖ (the more important matter) to improve, continuously, the quality of education

Efficiencies and Approaches

Witness, takes into consideration the improvement of the education quality and supplying and providing an answering ground in two important functions of validation [7], Van Damme, also considers the improvement of the quality of education and replying, presentation of clear information and direction of the education system in appropriate enjoyment of the resources possessed, as the four functions of validation [16], in consideration of the foregoing, we may consider the quality improvement, replying and reorganization as the main functions of the validation. Validation approaches may be brought forward with contact among the organizational commission, targets and needs of development of human resources. Educational needs of the work resources of the present and future, may originate from a common understanding which is required by the organization, and also the state of its materialization.

Such an approach may become continuous by qualitative assessment of knowledge, skill and the main worth of the present work resources. Organization should make sure that the required knowledge and skill of the personnel has been increased through the educational programs and has been applied [12]. As recounted by Baker [20], the quality is defined as total outcomes of an educational course. In his conjecture, a course may be considered as high-quality course when it has obtained outputs such as creation of a special level of ability in maximum possible time, making the skill needs satisfied and meeting the needs of development of professional courses.

Assessment Components

Phillips considers such components include the teaching methods, learning environment, program contents, educational targets, facilities and compiled calendar of education and teacher [21]. By adding and summing up the mentioned opinions we may list the main components of validation in 7 axis: calling, vocation and targets, organizational structure and management, educational cadre, learners, learning and instructing process, learning, educational courses, facilities and equipment [12].

First step in validation is to define the standards related to the components of a complex which is determined as the education center. Standards may be defined on the basis of the agreement of the instructors, learners, professional institutions and other related factors [4].

Opportunities and Threats

Strong Points of Accreditation

1. Assure the organization, senior management and the learners regarding the quality of the educational services rendered
2. Improve the education quality through compilation of the indexes and the agendas necessary for assessment
3. Encourage the education center for permanent improvement through continuous assessment
4. Support the education center against the pressures which may intimidate the efficiency of the center
5. Comprehensiveness of the assessment process which may prevent the simplification in the field of perception of the complications of educational processes
6. Supply the possibility of systematic information capture and gathering regarding the centers subject matter of assessment
7. Decrease the educational expenses through improvement of the structure and processes [12].

Value of validation is not limited to its inspection and supervision dimensions. Professional assessors believe that, even though validation may cause commissioning and strengthening the internal assessment process in the educational centers, and cause quality promotion, but, like any other assessment method, it has some noticeable weak points, which should be taken into consideration at the time of establishment of such structures.

Therefore, here we mention some of the most important weak points of accreditation:

- 1) Hesitancy about constancy of the results arisen and the probability of outbreak of Halo Effect (because the assessment result is based on the judgment of the experts)
- 2) Hesitancy about this matter that how much the specialists of a field supervise on the function of the persons of the same specialization as those of such specialist, seriously
- 3) Not becoming distinct the accurate weight and importance of the complex of the regulations determined which include the matters from a small part to very important part
- 4) Paying attention to the targets taken into consideration and not to pay attention to the other issues at the time of assessment
- 5) Prevention of the plans and programs of the points of view of the persons who were present at the education center, and have had the most complaints regarding the quality of that center
- 6) Danger of unifying the educational programs

Research Method

The review study over the papers and essays from the year 1999 through 2014 was analyzed and examined in the field of the quality of education and accreditation. In Iran many researches have not been conducted in this field, but the nearest research in this field is the research of Mr. Saeed Hodavand entitled "**Validation: Means of Education Quality Control**". In the year 1992, Mr. AbasatKhorasani analyzed and examined the techniques of need assessment on the basis of the educational standards and emphasized on the comprehensive educational courses and educational quality through examinations conducted in various countries.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Education centers of the organizations come face to face with various challenges. Such challenges may be placed on two sides of a continuum. On the one part, the responding-desirous management, willingness to accept responsibility and translucence against budget and investment has been done, and on the other

hand, quantitative development, without consideration to the qualitative development may entail consequences, such as losing the sense of confidence, weakness in supplying the knowledge and science required by the organization. Accreditation system is a voluntary system for quality assurance. Paying attention to the various dimensions of validation, educational culture and strategic planning and programming of the organization may assure the rhythmic and well-balanced quality and development of education, which should be taken into consideration by the educational services rendering center. Accreditation includes all dimensions of education and may cause auto regulation. Accreditation may provide continuous promotion of quality by internal and external assessment. At first, it may be identified through the appropriate means with respect to the existing status, and then it may determine the desirable (standard) status on the basis of the strategies, desires and targets. At the end, it proceeds to compare the existing status with the prearranged standards, and judges and arbitrates the quality of educational system, and the assessment indexes will be determined in proportion to the level of desirability of the educational system. It seems that development of the accreditation system has a positive effect on the quality of function and operation, and with serious attention to the matter of accreditation, the level of work commitment of the persons may be increased. In this line, accreditation as a comprehensive method of quality promotion has rendered a worthy assistance to the quality promotion, especially in education section. Quality assurance and accreditation may be considered as the ways of creation of satisfaction, direction and decrease in investment, which require increase in the level of cultural and social awareness and knowledge. The present paper emphasizes on this matter that Validation may help the qualitative improvement and promotion of the organizational functions through reforming the structures and the current processes of education, and may provide a field for meeting the needs brought forward. It is recommended that for continuation of the activities in such an environment, the organizations should emphasize on their privileges and preferences, expend the funds allocated in the appropriate situations, make effective interaction with other organizational units. Validation process should be designed to be capable of accurate assessment of the competences which have been targeted through education.

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