



Accreditation and Quality Assurance: Exploring Impact and Assessing Institutional Change in the US and Saudi Arabian Higher Education Institutions

Dr. Mahdi R. Aben Ahmed^{*}

Mha1121@hotmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to explore the perceptions of the English language program administrators on institutions in terms of overall program management, faculty development, and improvements in student services and facilities after accreditation. The study uses a mixed methods approach with data collected from a survey and semi-structured interviews with 24 English Language Program (ELP) directors and coordinators for a total of 48 administrators from United States of America and Saudi Arabia that pursued accreditation by Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA). The rationale behind this international approach was that some ELPs in KSA are mostly modelled on similar programs in the USA and these US institutions are accredited by CEA. Results indicated that institutional accreditation signified excellence, enhanced the national ranking of the institutions, and improved overall program management in both US and KSA, and to some extent, encouraged the faculty to upskill in KSA. However, student services and facilities registered only minor changes in the Kingdom post-accreditation but better outcomes in the USA. Moreover, institutions accredited for the first time in the Kingdom registered greater overall improvement in services and facilities than those which were not accredited or were accredited for the second time. The study sets a roadmap for the future of English Language Programs in the Kingdom and can give direction to the administrators and policy makers.

Keywords: Quality Assurance; CEA Accreditation, Faculty's Skills, English Language Education Policies.

^{*} Associate Professor of TESOL and Applied Linguistics, Jubail English Language and Preparatory Year Institute, Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, Jubail Industrial City, Saudi Arabia

Cite this article as: Aben Ahmed, M. R. (2025). Accreditation and Quality Assurance: Exploring Impact and Assessing Institutional Change in the US and Saudi Arabian Higher Education Institutions, *Arts for Linguistic & Literary Studies*, 7(1): 626-639.

© This material is published under the license of Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0), which allows the user to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format. It also allows adapting, transforming or adding to the material for any purpose, even commercially, as long as such modifications are highlighted and the material is credited to its author.



الاعتماد وضمان الجودة: قياس التأثير وتقييم التغيير المؤسسي في معاهد التعليم العالي لبرامج اللغة الإنجليزية بالمملكة العربية السعودية والولايات المتحدة الأمريكية

د. مهدي رضاء ابن أحمد *

Mha1121@hotmail.com

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى قياس أثر الاعتماد وتقييم التغييرات المستدامة المكتسبة من خلال تصورات مسؤولي برامج اللغة الإنجليزية للمؤسسات من حيث الإدارة العامة للبرنامج، وتطوير أعضاء هيئة التدريس، وتحسين الخدمات والمرافق للطلاب بعد الاعتماد. تستخدم الدراسة نهجًا مختلطًا من البيانات، متضمنة استطلاع ومقابلات شبه منظمة مع 24 مديرًا ومنسقًا لبرامج اللغة الإنجليزية (ELP) في كل من الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية والمملكة العربية السعودية (24=48)، الذين سعوا للحصول على الاعتماد من قبل هيئة اعتماد برامج اللغة الإنجليزية (CEA). وأشارت النتائج إلى أن الاعتماد المؤسسي أسهم في تعزيز الجودة والتميز والتصنيف بالإضافة إلى التغيير الإيجابي المستدام في إدارة البرامج بشكل عام في المملكة والولايات المتحدة، كما خلصت إلى أن الاعتماد أسهم -إلى حد ما- في تمكين وتشجيع أعضاء هيئة التدريس على تطوير مهاراتهم، مع تحسن ملحوظ في مصادر التعلم والخدمات الطلابية والمرافق اللازمة لتلبية احتياجات البرامج الأكاديمية في المملكة، بينما نتج عن ذلك تحسن كبير في هذه المصادر والخدمات بالولايات المتحدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ضمان الجودة، هيئة اعتماد برامج اللغة الإنجليزية، مهارات أعضاء هيئة التدريس، سياسات تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية.

* أستاذ اللغويات التطبيقية المشارك، معهد الجبيل للغة الإنجليزية والسنة التحضيرية، الهيئة الملكية للجبيل وينبع، الجبيل الصناعية، المملكة العربية السعودية.

للاقتباس: ابن أحمد، م. ر. (2025). الاعتماد وضمان الجودة: قياس التأثير وتقييم التغيير المؤسسي في معاهد التعليم العالي لبرامج اللغة الإنجليزية بالمملكة العربية السعودية والولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، *الآداب للدراسات اللغوية والأدبية*، 7(1): 626-639.

© نُشر هذا البحث وفقًا لشروط الرخصة Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)، التي تسمح بنسخ البحث وتوزيعه ونقله بأي شكل من الأشكال، كما تسمح بتكييف البحث أو تحويله أو إضافته إليه لأي غرض كان، بما في ذلك الأغراض التجارية، شريطة نسبة العمل إلى صاحبه مع بيان أي تعديلات أُجريت عليه.



Introduction

Globally, higher education in English has attained a significant stature during the last few decades in creating a global community of nations, and as a harbinger of the era of globalization facilitating major human revolutions across the globe (Anderson, Dator & Tehranian, 2011). English education has been a game changer in the making of many nations modern, their society dynamic and their economic power global. Universities and colleges have, as a consequence, opened their doors to all sections of society, particularly the young people and have empowered them to join the global workforce. In the current century, this has led to a great turn in the society when many of the subdued sections can avail the opportunity to rise in the social ladder due to their access to the English language which is an international language of communication today.

The United States' leading accrediting body for English language programs and institutions is the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) (Al-Bargi, 2019). International interest in CEA's certification procedure for English language programs increased in tandem with the global demand for quality assurance in higher education. Following Reeves' analysis, CEA started conducting certification activities outside of the US in 2005, mostly in the Middle East. Reeves (2019) explains the differences between US accreditation and the factors to be considered when "exporting" an accreditation system. The transferability of peer review and decision-making principles, the nature of the accreditor's relationship to the specialized professional field, the necessity of distinct standards for international settings, and other factors were all taken into consideration when CEA decided to broaden its purview to include international accreditation.

The CEA has in the last decades taken some important initiatives for improving the quality of English education in different continents. Notably these initiatives have focused on (i) improvement of learning outcomes at post-school levels; (ii) linking of students with the labour market; (iii) development of communication skills in students; (iv) assessment reforms; and (v) ensuring that institutions are accredited to lead to sustainable learning practices. This has been relevant for students and institutions for competing globally and meeting challenges that are contemporary with a pragmatic approach to tackling systemic redundancies. Further, they address the exigencies of a global world by raising the quality of language education exponentially by the application of latest research and technology. Emerging economies like China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East, which are also non-native speakers of the English language would likely be benefited from this futuristic and pragmatic approach of CEA in creating and managing an uninterrupted supply of future-ready manpower. This move in 2004 was largely prompted by the decay that had crept into institutions teaching English as a second or foreign language with little or no hand-holding in terms of quality assurance and sustenance of the same. The CEA accreditation system ensures that institutions that are placed high up in the ladder of quality do not assume that they have reached the pinnacle or



automatically confirm the attainment of the highest language proficiency for their learners. Being a quality assurance agency outside the country, the specific concerns in accreditation framework implementation compel these countries to make changes at the policy level to take under their ambit different types of educational institutions imparting English language learning. Accreditation not only assures quality of education but also that the same conforms to well-defined global standards. Moreover, with this outlook, quality assurance takes into consideration curriculum development, faculty development as well as learning audit. At the same time, the contemporary accreditation models put forth by CEA take into consideration the local context to ensure maximum results. In the current learning models, the student community is no longer alien or a passive participant in the overall learning process. The CEA accreditation model recognises that without the engagement of the learner base, no institution can deliver quality education.

Literature review

Aben Ahmed (2024) investigates, reviews, and evaluates the standards established by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), and determines what actions followed to apply those 11 standards to provide quality assurance, improvement, and long-lasting change that has been implemented that align with CEA standards and sub-standards. Very significantly, this study aims to determine whether CEA standards are in line with the cultural and environmental requirements of Saudi English language institutions by working with an accredited American institute at a prominent and well-known university in the United States and other CEA-accredited institutions there. Employing a variety of techniques, such as surveys, content analysis, and interviews, the study gains insights to improve English programs in (especially) institutes located in the mid-eastern region. According to the findings, 68% of Saudi respondents believed that CEA accreditation influenced English instruction in Saudi Arabia, whereas many American respondents (89%) said that it affected English language instruction in Saudi Arabia only. The findings also demonstrated that there will be a variety of difficulties in applying CEA standards in Saudi institutions, with the two biggest ones being a lack of resources and cultural misalignment. The results also highlighted the need for certain tactics that might be applied to better execute the CEA standards, such as improving faculty training programs, localizing curricula, and using culturally appropriate pedagogies that are appropriate for the Saudi context. The results showed that obtaining CEA accreditation has several long-term advantages for student achievement. These results have an impact on professional development, curriculum reform and institutional improvements in line with Vision 2030, which ensures that linguistics programs in Saudi Arabia are better formulated and well-equipped to address the needs of the industrial and academic sectors.

To encourage self-evaluation and quality in English language instruction and management, accreditation is essential. It guarantees top-notch instruction and offers the right resources and different kinds



of educational assistance to enable effective learning. Accordingly, Khojah and Shousha (2024) evaluate the academic and administrative procedures based on the female section of King Abdul-Aziz University's English Language Institute (ELI) accreditation and reaccreditation experiences. It seeks to record the improvements that are promoted as well as original and reaccreditation accreditation. Reporting accreditation issues and their effects on academic and administrative levels is another goal. Data for the study were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Participants in the study included ELI administrators and academics who worked on the accrediting process. The results showed that accreditation improved the organizational structure, work environment, and cultural effect of ELI's academic and administrative procedures.

The perspectives of managers, employees, instructors, and students in higher education regarding the effects of accreditation on institutional quality management are examined by Nguyen and Thi (2017). These opinions are investigated using a case study methodology that includes semi-structured interviews with important participants at a top Vietnamese institution. According to the findings, accreditation has an impact on many of the university's management operations, including its programs, instructional activities, faculty, support personnel, students, and buildings. We contend that accreditation plays a major role in raising the standard of instruction, learning, research, and administration at universities. Additionally, suggestions are made to enhance the application of accreditation results.

In today's globalized higher education scenario, international certification is a crucial yet contentious matter. In a 2015 case study, Collins examined the experience of a rigorous English language preparatory program at a Turkish university undergoing accreditation by a foreign organization and evaluated the degree to which the project was able to promote organizational culture changes. There was far less obvious evidence of changes in organizational culture, even though it was evident that the majority felt the certification had a major impact.

Accreditation groups, governments, corporations, and international organizations have all expressed interest in and concern about student outcomes in higher education in recent years. The success of higher education is increasingly being measured by student outcomes, and accrediting organizations demand that learning outcomes be clearly stated, evaluated, validated, and utilized as a roadmap for future development. Brahimi, Sarirete and Ibrahim (2016) explore how accreditation affects student outcomes in higher education. They specifically look at the effects of two accreditation bodies: the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology Inc. (ABET) and the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA), which was founded by the Higher Council of Education in Saudi Arabia. Findings from an Effat mathematics course from Jeddah, KSA showed the importance of learning outcomes in the evaluation strategy and methods applied in the learning process. The current trends in accreditation schemes are presented in this study based



on an analysis of the Finnish audit model of quality systems in higher education institutions, Languages Canada, the British Accreditation Council's (BAC)/International English Language Provider Accreditation Scheme (IELP) and BALEAP Accreditation Scheme (BAS), Accreditation UK, and international schemes created especially for language training providers, such as the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), Equals, and NEAS. The breadth of the schemes is examined in this study, along with the function of self-assessment, accreditation procedures, and quality standards and criteria. It examines whether the programs encourage incentives for improvement at the institutional level, support continuous development initiatives, and go beyond simply bestowing quality designations. This makes sense as per the findings of Algethami (2021) if programs select the right accrediting body and use caution when evaluating and creating their curricula, accreditation can serve as a catalyst for improvements in the EFL curriculum's design.

Dede and Polat (2024) present a thorough examination of the accrediting bodies that supervise and approve foreign language instruction programs in postsecondary educational establishments in accordance with quality requirements. In this case, document analysis—a popular data analysis method in qualitative research—was used to examine eight accreditation organizations that offer services for accrediting foreign language instruction. Dede and Polat focus on these agencies' organizational objectives, quality requirements, inspection procedures, validity periods, and wage policies. According to the study's findings, full standards for all essential areas—such as mission, curriculum and course design, management and administration, instruction and learning, certification and assessment, student affairs, staff development and profile, continuous development, and learning environment—are among the criteria that quality assurance agencies use in their evaluations. The validity periods of the accreditations issued by the quality assurance agencies also varied greatly, as did the environment of pay rules. In its conclusion, the study offers suggestions for the method and strategy to be applied when selecting the quality assurance company and, in turn, for the programs considering applying for accreditation.

Kotarska (2019) summarizes the current trends in accreditation schemes. This study is based on an analysis of the Finnish audit model of quality systems in higher education institutions, Languages Canada, the British Accreditation Council's (BAC)/International English Language Provider Accreditation Scheme (IELP) and BALEAP Accreditation Scheme (BAS), as well as international schemes created especially for language training providers, such as the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), Equals, and NEAS. The breadth of the schemes is examined in this study, along with the function of self-assessment, accreditation procedures, and quality standards and criteria. It looks at whether the programs do more than

just give out quality labels; it also looks at whether they encourage institutional improvement incentives and support ongoing development initiatives.

Research questions

The explicit aim of the CEA has been to foster quality improvement initiatives of institutions engaged in English education. On the sides, it also adds to the employability of the students, attracts funding, creates a global workforce, and leads to better mobility of professionals. Accreditation is not an absolute measure of institutional standing, only an assurance that the threshold criteria for quality are met with, quality of education goes beyond accreditation. At the same time, whatever thresholds are created need to be sustainable to maintain institutional credibility in the long run. Accordingly, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Has CEA accreditation added to the value of the institution in terms of overall program management and faculty development?
2. Whether and how CEA accreditation fostered a culture of improvement in student services, facilities, and clarity vis-à-vis the programs?

Methods

This was a mixed methods study carried out with respondents based in two countries namely USA and KSA. Based on extensive review of previous literature, opinions and advice of experts in these countries, and the results obtained in a pilot study, the final survey instrument was developed with 13 items eliciting general and specific information. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to ensure internal consistency of the instrument and changes were made to the original instrument. With a close eye on the research questions, the questionnaire items were centered around the four factors along with the subfactors as follows:

1. Efficacy of accreditation standards used by the CEA: Ensuring the quality of ELPs, pedagogical improvements, curriculum fulfilment
2. Adaptability of the CEA standards to ensure they were adequately flexible to suit the Saudi context: Suitability of the CEA benchmarks to the Saudi social, cultural, linguistic, educational needs, institutional practices that needed alignment with the same
3. Role of accreditation in teachers' professional development and readiness to innovate pedagogies: Teachers' professional development in terms of upskilling, and adoption of innovative practices
4. CEA in sustainable development of institutions and assuring quality: Areas that needed improvement to ensure sustainable development, role of CEA accreditation in placing practices that assured and enhanced institutional quality.



As mentioned earlier, 24 respondents each (purposive sample) from English Language Programs in the USA and KSA for a total of 48 administrators were requested to use the Google Forms Link to answer the questionnaire over a period of ten days. The study sample only comprised ELP administrators such as institute directors, program directors and self study coordinators to ensure homogeneity. Gender of the respondents was not a factor under consideration as the selection criteria was solely their role in the program. However, 19 of the respondents were female in this study. The sample unanimously had 11 or more years of experience in ELT, were familiar with CEA and its role, and were currently engaged in teaching and administrative roles in their respective institutions (data obtained from three general questions). All obtained responses were added to Spreadsheets and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The semi-structured interviews (with Saudi respondents only) centred around the same factors as in the questionnaire in addition to the impact of CEA accreditation on students and institutions, shortcomings of the current accreditation procedures, and suggestions for improvement. Data obtained from the semi-structured interviews (12) was then collated with the quantitative findings to obtain results.

Analysis and Findings

The results of the questionnaire are summarized in Table 1 below (1=very poor perception, 5= very high perception).

	Question	1	2	3	4	5
1	What is the importance of the CEA accreditation for ensuring the overall quality of English language programs?	0	0	0	0	48
2	How effectively do the CEA standards fulfil the specific needs of English language programs in non-native speaker countries?	0	0	0	0	48
3	What is the efficacy of the current CEA standards in enhancing the prevalent pedagogies, curricular needs, and institutional performance?	0	0	0	2	46
4	How would you rate the flexibility of the CEA standards in adapting to the specific context of regional institutions (culturally, socially, linguistically)?	0	0	2	1	45
5	What is the level of contribution of CEA accreditation to teachers' professional development?	11	17	20	0	0
6	Do you believe that CEA accreditation encourages innovation and sustainable change in English language teaching within your institution?	0	10	21	11	6

7	Do you feel that the CEA accreditation process adequately support the needs of non-native English-speaking students?	0	0	4	3	41
8	How far do you think CEA accreditation supports sustainable development?	1	1	0	0	46
9	What is the impact of CEA accreditation on students' English proficiency?	0	0	11	19	18
10	What is the impact of CEA accreditation on institutional reputation and enrolment?	0	0	0	0	48

In the forthcoming section, each of the factors on which the survey and interviews were based are analyzed and results discussed to answer the research questions.

1. RQ1: Has CEA accreditation added to the value of the institution in terms of overall program management and faculty development?

Questionnaire items 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10 were targeted to answer the first research question in this study. As per the data obtained, a clear chasm is created between institutional and teacher development as an outcome of CEA accreditation. The respondents perceive the role of CEA as being paramount as far as institutional standing, fulfilling learner needs and curricular needs, reputation and enrolment are concerned. Except for the question *What is the level of contribution of CEA accreditation to teachers' professional development*, there is complete or near complete unanimity on the efficacy of CEA accreditation in ensuring the overall quality of English language programs, enhancing the prevalent pedagogies, fulfilling curricular needs, and institutional performance, ensuring innovation and sustainable change in English language teaching within institution, and raising institutional reputation and enrolments. However, teachers' professional development seems to take a beating as it is rated low on the Likert Scale at very poor (11), poor (17), neutral (20) responses to question 5 (What is the level of contribution of CEA accreditation to teachers' professional development). This finding is also supported by the general opinion in the semi-structured interviews where only one of the 12 subjects barely mentioned that institutions engage in "encouragement and support of professional development activities for faculty, administrations and staff". On the other hand, quality assurance owing to CEA accreditation was highly acclaimed by all the interviewees whose views focused on three main aspects of quality assurance especially owing to the self-evaluation practices encouraged by the CEA procedures:

1. Promoting a strong quality assurance culture: The self-study process helped the institute to review its quality measures through the establishment of a solid quality assurance system that takes into consideration the continuous assessment and monitoring of quality measures and practices within the institute.



2. Consistency: During and after the accreditation process, the institute has become more familiar and committed to quality practices not only in terms of the regular review of policies and procedures, but also regarding the continuous assessment of performance and documentation of findings for making proactive actions that lead to preparing for better outcomes.
3. Teamwork spirit: The long accreditation process has been a result of continuous group work. The participation of stakeholders in the accreditation activities provided an opportunity for participants to improve and strengthen their teamwork skills and successful collaboration.

Four of the interviewees added that the CEA accreditation formed a key part of quality assurance as articulation of policies and procedures and meticulous adherence to them was followed. One of them opined, "We established the culture of improvement by committing to continuous review of our plans and curriculum. We consider the accreditation process as a project and we successfully manage the project, and we communicate changes made along the way to our students, staff, and stakeholders."

Further, another interviewee shared that their team gained at least two lessons from the accreditation project as "we applied the worldwide accepted change management standards". One major lesson learned from the accreditation project (CEA) was the success to get all stakeholders involved in the accreditation-related initiatives to prepare them to accept and participate in the change. This was made possible by selecting the right "change agents" who believed in the change project and put all their energies and efforts into making the dream come true. Furthermore, coordination between different departments and committees by using smart management strategies aided this process as much as open and welcoming communication skills that helped in dealing with resistance to change and eradicating major roadblocks against the progression of the project. The second lesson learned by this team was that motivation is a key success factor. Though the project seemed huge in the beginning, they succeeded to make it project a source for motivation to all stakeholders through the series of workshops and meetings where the steps already achieved towards the submission of the self-study report were shared and when stakeholders understood that there was work going on, they became more ambitious to participate and actively contribute to make the project a success. Maximum participation was reached during the last phase of the project where the site visit was organized for the CEA examination team.

Communication was voted as the moot point by another interviewee who reported that the "availability of means of exchange of communication and information among those who need it" made a great deal of difference in ensuring that policies and procedures were in place, accessible, and reviewed systematically, a factor which was absent in the pre-accreditation stage of the institution. Institutional gains were highlighted by a participant who added, "Of course being accredited by the CEA is a benefit to my institute. After accreditation, my institute gained a reputation as one of the best language-teaching institutions

in the region. The number of students increased along with the growth of the institute in terms of courses and programs offered to local industrial companies who have become more interested in sending their trainees for taking short language courses.” Yet another participant added, “The accreditation led to public recognition and increase the number of enrolment. The accreditation ensures students and parents that our school meets established academic standards. Accreditation encourages continuous improvement.”

In addition to these positive views, sustainability was also highly voted by the participants. The Program Development, Planning, and Review standard of the CEA was seen by six of the interviewees as being absolutely meant for the development of the accredited institute. However, it was also noted that the CEA does not have a clear monitoring system to ensure that academic institutions are in alignment with the development plans. This was upheld by another participant who noted on the self-study (review) process, “The process required by the self-study has served multiple functions at our institute. Steering committee and subcommittees work to bring together faculty and staff from various parts of the institute and employees from other departments allowing them to interact with employees in positions they may not otherwise have had the opportunity to work with. Also, the self-study helped the institute strengthen its curriculum and assessment through the focused committee work on SLOs with accompanying aligned assessment work. Overall, the self-study process has been an excellent opportunity to strengthen policies, procedures and collaborative work at our program.”

RQ2: Whether and how CEA accreditation fostered a culture of improvement in student services, facilities, and clarity vis-à-vis the programs?

Survey items 2, 4, 7, 9 pertained to the takeaways for the student community from the CEA accreditation of their institutions. Notably, the participants highly perceived the role of CEA accreditation as being beneficial to the students in terms of fulfilling the specific needs of English language programs in non-native speaker countries, being flexible in adapting to the specific context of regional institutions (culturally, socially, linguistically), and adequately supporting the needs of non-native English-speaking students. However, there was a division of opinion on the benefits of CEA to the attainment of language proficiency of the learners. This may be attributed to the fairly recent accreditation given to some of these institutions. Similar dissent was noted in the interviews, three participants agreed that student achievement standard needs careful reconsideration because, as things are now, this standard does not consider the particularities of institutions when it comes to admission policies and requirements. In other words, although this standard almost fully covers the main aspects of quality assurance development for any English language institution, it still requires some additions and modifications. This is nowhere truer than in KSA where admission norms have many caveats to accommodate students from rural or disadvantaged sections. One administrator noted



in the context of an institute in the Kingdom, "A placement test is not a requirement in the admission policy of my institute. Therefore, this standard should not be a requirement."

Conclusions

The increasing focus on internationalization in higher education has made quality assurance even more crucial, which has led to a boom in research on accrediting procedures. Despite adopting accreditation initiatives somewhat later than other disciplines, foreign language instruction in higher education is currently subject to thorough evaluation by national and international quality assurance organizations.

Accreditation directly affects self-evaluation and quality in English language instruction and administration. It also guarantees excellent instruction and offers the right resources and other forms of educational assistance to enable fruitful learning. Academic institutions frequently employ accreditation as a method of quality assurance to reassure their stakeholders. However, accreditation necessitates not just financial and human resources, but also time. The question of whether accreditation is worthwhile and may result in a real improvement in the calibre of programs and courses is one that policymakers and school administrators must consider. The accreditation of English language programs and institutions has recently drawn more attention from throughout the world, and a few accrediting bodies are becoming more and more trusted, the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) being at the forefront with focus on post-secondary English language programs and institutions. A key component of the 44 CEA criteria is the curriculum.

The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) is United States' leading accrediting body for English language programs and institutions. International interest in CEA's certification procedure for English language programs increased in tandem with the global demand for quality assurance in higher education. Following research, CEA started conducting certification activities in the Middle East. The US certification is unique as it takes into consideration the transferability of peer-review and decision-making principles, the nature of the accreditor's relationship to the specialized professional sector, and the necessity of distinct criteria for international accreditation (Kumar et al., 2020).

Based on the findings of this study, many useful conclusions have been reached. One, the academic development plan requested by CEA enables the institute to better plan its activities monitor the implementation, and identify areas for improvement. Similarly, the Student Achievement standards help institutions to construct and establish an efficient system for the measurement of the achievement of students' learning outcomes, which by itself leads to better identifying language skills that need further improvement in terms of either teaching, learning, or assessment. The Program Development, Planning, and Review standard as a procedure has a tremendous impact on the learning outcomes. One part of this area is the academic

development plan, which includes an action plan with clear objectives for the development of students' learning experiences, including engagement and critical thinking.

On the administrative aspect, the self-study review was an opportunity as a learning experience for all involved parties as members gain experience in gathering, disseminating, and analyzing information related to all aspects of the CEA standards. This helps establish a review and appraisal process within the program, familiarizes faculty with policies and procedures that guide and organize the work within the institute. Further, this collaboration reinforces teamwork spirit to achieve shared objectives, identify strengths, weaknesses and determine how to deal with unexpected circumstances. Curricular and assessment also improve as brainstorming helps pool all intellectual resources. However, teachers' professional development does not appear to gain from CEA accreditation and the teacher being an important connection in the learning chain, this aspect needs careful planning and implementation at the ELP institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings and conclusions, the following are recommended:

1. Faculty and students at institutions need more collaborative effort in drafting policies and procedures.
2. Appraisal and review of faculty members should be central to program objectives so that their developmental needs may be identified and fulfilled.
3. Faculty and students should be aware of complaint procedures to raise learning issues.
4. Program Directors should encourage teacher and student feedback to keep track of their needs.
5. Curriculum revision based on needs analysis should form a part of the CEA procedure.

Limitations

The CEA operations are worldwide, but this study considered only two of the learning environments. The researcher is aware that ESL and EFL scenarios may be typical to regions or countries, therefore, the results of this study may not be generalizable to all such learning situations.

References

- Aben Ahmed, M. (2024). Implementation and Impact of CEA Accreditation Standards for Quality Assurance and Improvement: A Comparative Analysis of US and Select Saudi Arabian Educational Institutions. *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture*, 1517–1534. <https://doi.org/10.70082/esiculture.vi.1654>
- Algethami, G. (2021). The impact of accreditation on the improvement of the EFL curriculum: A case-study. *Proceedings of International Virtual Conference on Language and Literature*, 2, 30-36.
- Al-Bargi, A. (2019). Implementation of curriculum and assessment accreditation standards in an English language programme at a Saudi university. *Quality assurance and accreditation in foreign language education: Global issues, models, and best practices from the Middle East and Turkey*, 191-208.



- Brahimi, T., Sarirete, A., & Ibrahim, R. M. (2016). The impact of accreditation on student learning outcomes. *International Journal of Knowledge Society Research (IJKSR)*, 7(4), 51-62. 10.4018/IJKSR.2016100105
- Collins, I. (2015). Using international accreditation in higher education to effect changes in organizational culture: A case study from a Turkish university. *Journal of Research in International Education*. 14. 141-154. 10.1177/1475240915592589.
- Dede, O. & Polat, M. (2024). Accreditation in foreign language education: a comparative study of quality assurance agencies in higher education. *SELCUK 11th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL SCIENCES*. 65-77
- Khojah, A., & Shousha, A. (2020). Academic Accreditation Process of English Language Institute: Challenges and Rewards. *Higher Education Studies*, 10(2), 176-188.
- Kotarska, L. (2019). Accreditation: a commodity or a quest for quality?. *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education: Global Issues, Models, and Best Practices from the Middle East and Turkey*, 55-71. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_5
- Kumar, P., Shukla, B., & Passey, D. (2020). Impact of accreditation on quality and excellence of higher education institutions. *Revista Investigacion Operacional*, 41(2), 151-167.
- Nguyen, H. C., & Ta, T. T. H. (2018). Exploring impact of accreditation on higher education in developing countries: a Vietnamese view. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 24, 154-167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2017.1406001>
- Reeves, M. (2019). The case of the commission on English language program accreditation: US specialized accreditation as a response to the increasing demand for quality assurance in foreign language education. *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Foreign Language Education: Global Issues, Models, and Best Practices from the Middle East and Turkey*, 37-54. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21421-0_4

