

Quality managers' and academic faculty's perspectives on the effectiveness and challenges of the quality assurance and accreditation processes

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Abstract

Objective: To assess the implementation of quality assurance and accreditation processes in undergraduate medical training programmes, and to identify the challenges in this regard.

Method: The qualitative study was conducted from September to November 2023 at the College of Medicine, King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and comprised administrative officials and academic faculty involved in the National Centre for Academic Accreditation and Assessment accreditation process between 2016 and 2021. Data was collected using face-to-face interview with each participant. Data was analysed thematically.

Results: Of the 8 subjects, 3(37.5%) were administrative officials and 5(62.5%) were faculty members. The three themes identified related to the quality assurance process were: Enhances programme's efficiency; increases awareness regarding quality and accreditation processes, and the challenges in the way of implementing the process.

Conclusion: There were several advantages identified regarding the quality assurance and accreditation processes, but there were still challenges in this regard.

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Introduction

Providing high-quality education in medical programmes to students has become a priority nationally and internationally. In the educational sector, quality means that the educational programme should provide an appropriate environment for teaching and learning, resulting in graduates with acceptable knowledge and skills.¹

Accreditation ensures graduates are prepared to further their training by engaging various stakeholders, such as students, educators, employers, administrative staff and patients.² The results of an accreditation process are used to monitor a programme's quality to apply best practices in the field.³ In addition, it supports the educational programme in achieving minimal quality standards and recognising its strengths and weaknesses, which leads to developing action plans to foster continuous improvement.¹

Approximately 3,000 medical schools worldwide provide education and training through different curricula, experiences, environments, and lengths of study.⁴ As a result, universal standards for medical schools are required to ensure the graduates have the minimum required

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competencies.⁵ International medical graduates have recently been granted the right to hold a certificate in Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery from colleges under the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) by adhering to the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) standards.^{6,7}

The WFME ensures the medical programme is relevant and appropriate for preparing medical graduates for national and international labour markets, and improving employability and healthcare service quality with the required competencies.^{8,9} Moreover, it seeks to provide an independent, transparent and rigorous method of ensuring that medical college accreditation is internationally accepted and adheres to best practices and high standards.¹ This recognition can be obtained from a local or international agency that collaborates with ECFMG and follows WFME standards.¹⁻⁵

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the National Centre for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) was established in 2004. It was approved by the Higher Education Council to develop a comprehensive quality assurance and accreditation system based on international experience while considering local needs and characteristics.^{10,11} The NCAAA is a self-governing organisation that reports directly to the Ministry of Education and the Council of Ministers. The NCAAA is responsible for establishing accreditation standards and criteria, reviewing and evaluating current performance, and monitoring the academic programme and educational

institution improvement.¹¹ In addition, the NCAAA communicates with international agencies to gain expert experience and recognition of the academic programmes. Among the medical colleges in KSA, there are 21 colleges accredited by the NCAAA since 2016. King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS) underwent the accreditation process in 2019 and was accredited in March 2021.¹¹

A study conducted at the al-Qassim University's College of Medicine involved a mock CAAA accreditation process between 2008 and 2009.¹² The findings indicated that the educational process had improved, and educators and students were more aware of the importance of implementing a quality system.¹² Another study showed an improvement in the quality of educational services and processes in the medical programme at al-Qassim University.¹¹ In addition, the achievement of learning outcomes was monitored regularly after accreditation. Regarding curriculum development, the college became more open to curriculum revisions to meet evolving national and international standards for medical education.¹¹

It is rare to obtain the perspectives of faculty members and quality managers on implementing the NCAAA standard for improving the quality of a medical programme. To fully comprehend the quality accreditation (QA) process, its effectiveness, challenges and its future direction, more studies covering many viewpoints are required to address the gaps and challenges that remain unfilled. As such, the current study was planned to investigate the effectiveness and associated challenges of implementing quality assurance and accreditation processes in the undergraduate medicine programme at a medical college.

Subjects and Methods

The qualitative study was conducted from September to November 2023 at the College of Medicine, (KSAU-HS), Riyadh, KSA.¹³ Using purposeful sampling technique,¹⁴ the sample was raised, and it comprised administrative officials and academic faculty from KSAU-HS Riyadh and Jeddah campuses who had been involved in the NCAAA accreditation process between 2016 and 2021. Data was collected using face-to-face interview with each participant after approval from the institutional ethics review board of the King Abdullah International Medical Research Centre (KAIMRC), KSA, and informed consent from each subject (Appendix 1). Faculty members and administrative officials who had not participated in the accreditation process were excluded.

Data was collected using face-to-face interview with each participant in the light of an semi-structured interview

guide with prompts (Table 1, Appendix 2). Only the interviewer and the interviewee were present during the interviews, which took place either in the participant's office or online through Zoom at their homes, depending on each individual's preference. All the interviews were audiotaped and lasted 20-30 minutes. The responses were collected until they reached the point of data saturation.¹⁵

The data was subjected to thematic analysis using NVivo.¹⁴ Data was first classified into categories, which led to the generation of codes that indicated data patterns. These descriptive labels were sorted into smaller subsets. The emerging patterns provided an explanation for the data's recurring relationships. Coding was done by one researcher, and two other researchers reviewed it and modified it, if required.¹⁶

Results

Of the 8 subjects, 3(37.5%) were administrative officials, marked as 'managers', and 5(62.5%) were faculty members (Table 2). A total of three themes and 13 sub-themes were identified (Table 3).

The first theme was that the quality assurance and accreditation processes had enhanced the programme's efficiency.

The overall assumption of all the candidates was that the quality process had helped enhance the programme's efficiency by improving the educational environment, teaching and learning experiences, and graduate performance. The process of quality and accreditation processes had been influenced by many factors, or sub-themes.

The first sub-theme was students' feedback. A manager reported that they had a process in which students provided feedback, which helped them improve the quality of the educational services, including their satisfaction, teaching and clinical strategies, and assessment methods.

"We also improved the student satisfaction services. We also improved the assessment. On the clinical side, we had so much of improvements." (Manager# 1)

"In terms of efficiency of work, it increased in terms of more research." (Manager# 1)

"Listening to the student feedback in the evaluation or direct students' comments, and discussing these comments either in the department council or in the curriculum committee enhances the programme quality." (Manager# 3)

The second sub-theme was programme accreditation's advantageous impact on the quality processes. One imperative narrative was that the stakeholders believed

Appendix 1: Consent form.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of National Guard - Health Affairs			المملكة العربية السعودية وزارة الحرس الوطني - الشؤون الصحية
Informed Consent for Cross-Sectional Surveys		إقرار موافقة للمشاركة بدراسة مقطعية	
Study Title: <u>Quality managers' and academic faculty's perspectives on the effectiveness and challenges of the quality assurance process at the College of Medicine at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS)</u>			
Study No.:			
Principal Investigator:			
<p>You are requested to participate in research that will be supervised by (Prof. Sajida Agha) at (KSAU-HS Riyadh and Jeddah campuses).</p> <p>This study is about (identifying the effectiveness and challenges of implementing quality processes in undergraduate health professions institutions from quality managers and academic staff perspectives).</p> <p>Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to not complete this survey without giving any reason, and this will not affect your current or future medical care in MNG-HA.</p> <p>You do not have to sign this information sheet; you can only choose to agree/disagree; your acceptance to complete the survey will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate.</p> <p>Your responses will be kept anonymous. However, whenever one works with email/the internet, there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. Despite this possibility, the risks to your physical, emotional, social, professional, or financial well-being are considered to be 'less than minimal'.</p> <p>If you have any questions about the research, please contact (Prof. Sajida Agha, Department of Medical Education, KSAU-HS, Riyadh/ Tel. No. (W): 95250, Mobile No.: 0547549430, /bghasa@ksau-hs.edu.sa)</p> <p>If you have any enquiries related to your rights as a research subject, you can contact the Institutional Review Board at Tel 8011111 Ext. 14572.</p>	<p>أنت مدعو للانضمام طوعاً لدراسة بحثية سوف يشرف عليها (الأستاذة الدكتورة ساجدة أغا) في (جامعة الملك سعود بن عبدالعزيز للعلوم الصحية الرياض و جدة)</p> <p>هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى (تحديد مدى فعالية وتحديات تنفيذ عمليات الجودة في مؤسسات الكوثر الصحية كالتخصص من وجهة نظر مديرى الجودة وأعضاء هيئة التدريس)</p> <p>إن مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة طوعية ولك الحق التام في عدم قبول تعبئة الاستمارة أو الانسحاب في أي وقت تشاء بدون ابداء الأسباب ولن يؤثر ذلك على الرعاية الطبية المقدمة لك حالياً أو في المستقبل في الشؤون الصحية بوزارة الحرس الوطني.</p> <p>لا يجب عليك التوقيع على ورقة المعلومات هذه . فقط عليك الاختيار موافق / غير موافق. فمجرد قبولك تعبئة هذا الاستبيان يعتبر بمثابة إقرار بالموافقة على المشاركة في هذا البحث .</p> <p>ستبقى الردود على الأسئلة سرية ومع ذلك . فإن العمل عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني والانترنت يفي هناك احتمال الاختراق خصوصية البيانات وسرية المعلومات ولكن بالرغم من هذه الاحتمالية تبقى الاخطار البدنية والعاطفية والاجتماعية والمهنية والمالية المترتبة عليك ضمن الحد الأدنى من الخطورة.</p> <p>إذا كان لديك أي استفسار حول هذا البحث - يرجى الاتصال (الأستاذة الدكتورة ساجدة أغا، قسم التعليم الطبي، جامعة الملك سعود بن عبدالعزيز للعلوم الصحية، تحويلة: 95250، رقم الجوال: 0547549430)</p> <p>في حال كان لديك الاستفسارات المتعلقة بحقوقك كموضوع بحث يمكنك الاتصال بمجلس المراجعة المؤسسية على هاتف 8011111 تحويلة 14572</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Agree to participate <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree to participate		<input type="checkbox"/> موافق على المشاركة <input type="checkbox"/> غير موافق على المشاركة	
<p>This information shall not be used, disclosed, or published without written approval from the King Abdullah International Medical Research Center</p>			
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Non-Clinical Form Rev. 11/2014 O&M 1014		Self APP 1419-05 Page 1 of 2 Appendix J	

that when there is an institutional or programme quality assurance process in place, the second cycle of the process of applying for any other national or international accreditation becomes easy.

Table-1: The interview questions.

Questions
1. What is your perception of quality and accreditation?
2. How did you feel about the quality of the college before your institution went through the accreditation process?
3. What possible advantages did you envision for your college in receiving high-quality accreditation?
4. What potential difficulties did you expect with your college receiving quality accreditation?
5. How did you view the function of quality accreditation in encouraging institutional quality improvement?
6. How did the accreditation procedure affect faculty members' work before it was accredited?
7. What was your experience during the accreditation process?
8. What features of the accrediting procedure were the most beneficial?
9. How has accreditation affected faculty members' work since the procedure for accreditation?
10. What chances has accreditation given your school to flourish and expand?

Appendix -2: Interview prompts.

Quality managers and academic faculty's perspectives on the effectiveness and challenged of the quality assurance process at the College of Medicine at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS)

Interview prompt

Demographic information

Academic Rank: _____

Specialty: _____

Position: _____

Place of work: _____

Accreditation process involvement: _____

General Question:

1. What is your perception of quality and accreditation?
2. How did you feel about the quality of the college before your institution went through the accrediting process?
3. What possible advantages did you envision for your college in receiving high-quality accreditation?
4. What potential difficulties did you expect with your college receiving quality accreditation?
5. How did you view the function of quality accreditation in encouraging institutional quality improvement?
6. How did the accreditation procedure affect faculty members' work before it was accredited?
7. What actual difficulties did your institution and you encounter in obtaining accreditation?
8. What was your experience during the accreditation process?
9. What kind of planning did your institution do for the accrediting procedure?
10. What features of the accrediting procedure were the most beneficial?
11. How did the accrediting process effect your understanding of the function of accreditation agencies?
12. How has accreditation affected faculty members' work since the procedure for accreditation?
13. What chances has accreditation given your school to flourish and expand?

Table-2: Characteristics of the participants (n=8).

Participants	Gender		Riyadh	Jeddah	Chairperson of committees
	Male	Female	Campus	Campus	
Directors and co-director	2	1	1	2	2
Faculty Members	3	2	2	3	4

"We are going for reaccreditation for the institutional one. And it has become easy. We know the process and we know what evidences are to be provided. So it becomes easy." (Manager# 1)

"If you are already accredited, it eases the institution's accreditation because people at the lower level have already gone through the process." (Manager# 1)

"Having the NCAAA accreditation will grant us other accreditation. This has made everyone at ease." (Faculty# 1)

"The quality and accreditation process was intimidating, but it has optimised the experience of academic faculty members." (Faculty# 2)

"... doing the accreditation itself with the team, dealing with a lot of obstacles, and a lot of difficulties along the way during three or four years' time, gave me a lot of experience about the different aspects of the quality of teaching and learning education, as well as supporting faculty, supporting students." (Faculty# 1)

"... most people who worked on the accreditation component have the mentality that things need to be done that way because this is the way accreditation is required." (Faculty# 1)

"... there was a difference before the accreditation and after accreditation. We have completely changed the quality assurance process in the college." (Manager# 3)

The third sub-theme was related to the evaluation mechanisms in accreditation and quality improvement processes. The participants discussed the importance of both internal and external evaluations for processes aimed at improving quality. They believed that input from experts outside the programme needed to be sought on a regular basis. The participants agreed with the feedback and its positive effects on institutional accreditation.

"I think one of the most important advantages is realising how many good things and qualities we have at the college, realising that there are so many aspects which are really good in the college." (Faculty# 1)

"It helps everyone, whether individual or department, to see the point where we stand, and then how to proceed on a specific practice, where we should go. How to achieve the target." (Manager# 2)

"... the self-scale evaluation (SSE) ... was the most beneficial

Table-3: The themes and sub-themes identified.

Themes	Sub-themes	Frequency
Enhances program's efficiency through quality assurance and accreditation processes	Students' feedback helps improve the programme	General
	Programme Accreditation's advantageous impact on the quality processes	General
	Evaluation mechanisms in accreditation and quality improvement processes	Typical
	Division of work among academic faculty to enhance accreditation processes	Variant
	Communication is the key to improving quality	Typical
Good awareness of the quality and accreditation processes	Quality assurance planning	Typical
	Important Accreditation Elements	General
	Scholarship and quality assurance and accreditation processes	General
Challenges of the quality assurance and accreditation processes	Resistance to the quality assurance and accreditation processes	General
	Lack of unification and experience in the quality process	Typical
	Lack of a robust quality process	Variant
	Shortage of manpower	General
	Lack of proper documentation	Typical

General = applicable to all cases, Typical = applicable to at least half of the cases.

because we evaluate ourselves." (Manager# 3)

The participants showed optimism towards external evaluation.

"I think one of the advantages is that if we get the accreditation now, there is another accreditation, which is like an international medical accreditation." (Faculty# 1)

"They were very supportive. There are either external consultants, the NCAAA consultant, or our reviewers, all are very cooperative, and they are very supportive . . . we get many benefits from them." (Manager# 3)

The fourth sub-theme was the division of work among academic faculty to enhance accreditation processes. The participants shared their thoughts about how the academic faculty members contribute to quality culture. They mentioned that one of the aspects of getting accreditation and inculcating quality culture was to divide the work among the academic faculty members based on their expertise. This helped improve the overall quality of the organisation and accelerated the process of collecting data and assessing the quality of practices.

"They try to put the experienced people according to their expertise in the domain or the standard they are working on, like teaching and learning and so on." (Faculty# 1)

"Yes, there is some additional load distributed among all faculty members to ensure everyone participates in the accreditation process. We divided the job among the faculty, and asked each one to be responsible for the standard criteria and to collect evidence and write a section on the self-studying board. So there was an additional load on the faculty." (Manager# 3)

The final sub-theme under the first theme was the role of effective communication in improving the quality. The participants emphasised that communication was essential to the quality and accreditation process.

"... the college communicated with every faculty member who was involved in the accreditation process, and divided different tasks among them according to the standard they were working on. This helped us in getting an institutional accreditation." (Faculty# 1)

"I always have to communicate with the faculty and ensure that their quality culture has been implemented by increasing the quality of the lectures."

(Manager# 3)

Another important factor identified by Faculty # 3 was that continuous meetings were the key to regularly monitoring and improving the quality process. In these meetings, different aspects were discussed, which helped resolve any obstacle in the quality improvement process.

"The other thing is we had an arrangement of a continuous meeting to be conducted, and they were conducted with due arrangements. Everyone would meet from time to time to discuss their updates and anything that needed to be improved or modified." (Faculty# 1)

The second theme was about good awareness of the quality and accreditation processes. The participants were well-informed regarding the processes of quality improvement, accreditation, and the opportunities to receive structured feedback from institutional accreditation body and an expert.

The first sub-theme was related to quality assurance planning. All the subjects knew the quality assurance process, including quality assurance planning.

"The calendar was made by the vice-president. We called it the development of quality management protocol. We followed that. That was the planning, and the rest of the planning came from the NCAAA when it sent us the schedules." (Manager# 1)

Moreover, *"there were external evaluators appointed for our programme"*. (Manager# 1)

In addition, there was a *"committee to ensure alignment with the timeframe"*. (Manager# 2)

The second sub-theme was about important accreditation

elements. All the subjects acknowledged the importance of accreditation and the key elements involved in implementing accreditation and quality improvement processes into practice. It was considered a cardinal component of organisational success.

"The accreditation is reorganised, and the programme is of high quality to ensure that the documentation is available for any evaluation time. It is not only for accreditation or any single evaluation." (Manager# 3)

"... the environment right now demands that institutions get accreditation." (Manager# 1).

"For accreditation, I think it is the official way to make sure that educational programmes in a university or college are following the high standard of higher education in line with the best practices in teaching, learning and assessment in all domains of the educational activities." (Faculty# 1)

Most of the participant recognised the role of accreditation agencies.

"Accreditation agencies are important because they recognise you as a good college, and, as a college that does everything in line with the best practices." (Manager# 1)

Additionally,

"If not exceptional, at least you maintain the standard of what is expected of you. This is the national minimum criteria." (Manager# 1)

Another element that was stressed by many participants was the unification of instructional materials and approaches.

"... accreditation enabled us to unify things on all aspects, whether academic curriculum delivery, or just managing the labs." (Manager# 1)

"It lets everyone realise and be aware of the qualities and the strengths as well as the weaknesses and the areas that need to be improved or areas that we are missing or need to pay more attention to." (Faculty# 1)

The final sub-theme under the second theme was related to the element of scholarship in the context of quality assurance and accreditation processes. All the participants were aware that learning about accreditation and quality assurance procedures improved their capacity ensure a better quality of scholarship.

"It is like everything is about self-evaluation, which helps everyone, whether individual or department or the college itself, to see the point where we stand, and then how to proceed on a specific path." (Manager# 2)

"Quality in education is an essential thing that can ensure productivity across all aspects of academic activities to make sure it is up to the high standards and is improving with time." (Faculty# 1)

The third theme covered the challenges in the way of the quality assurance and accreditation processes. The participants discussed the challenges that needed to be addressed in order to enhance the impact of the processes. Issues like limited staff, lack of unified quality processes, and resistance were identified by many of the participants.

The first sub-theme was resistance to the quality assurance and accreditation processes. The managers reported resistance from academic faculty to quality assurance and involvement in the accreditation process.

"People do not want to do this. It is an extra burden. You have to push people to do or to ask them even for a simple report. This was the first limitation. People did not want the extra burden. They wanted to have nothing to do with this. You were supposed to do it yourself." (Manager# 1)

"If you initiate a new system, you find some resistance from some departments, which is always expected." (Manager# 2)

The second sub-theme was about the lack of unification and experience in the quality and accreditation processes.

"Lack of experience, lack of documentation and evidence." (Manager# 3)

"Before accreditation, honestly, I did not know anything about key performance indicators (KPIs)". (Faculty# 4)

Furthermore, the participants highlighted an opportunity for enhancing consistency among instructors teaching similar modules in both the male and female sections, as well as across the university's various campuses. Addressing the issue could foster a more unified educational experience for all the students.

"The two campuses functioned like they were two different universities. We were doing this our way, and they were doing it their way." (Manager# 1)

"Even for the lectures which were delivered, they were different. I was teaching biochemistry which had the same objective and the same curriculum, but I was teaching it in my own way." (Faculty# 4)

The next sub-theme was about the lack of a robust quality process.

"Sometimes you cannot directly approach them. You have to approach via the middle link. This delay is a process of helping them." (Manager# 1)

"I was a leader of the teaching and learning standard, which was the highest among them. It was time-consuming, exhausting, and needed a lot of reading, a lot of documentation, and a lot of following up with different aspects or people to fill the gaps. The preparation took us a long time and a lot of hours of meetings and reviewing every KPI and every single recommendation from the external reviewers." (Faculty# 1)

"Communication was a challenge. People did not understand each other at all." (Manager# 1)

"I think the NCAAA maybe requires extra work in terms of communicating with the colleges." (Faculty# 3)

The fourth sub-theme was about the shortage of manpower, resulting in compromised quality assurance and accreditation.

"You require a lot of manpower to do a simple accreditation. It is a huge task that cannot be done by a few people. This still is a limitation." (Manager# 1)

"When the process got delayed, we had to redo the whole write-up again, which was also challenging with the limited manpower." (Manager# 1)

The most commonly cited challenge of the accreditation process was the workload and its effect on faculty wellbeing.

"Well, I am going to be honest. It affected us a lot. We were extremely busy all the time. It exhausted us." (Faculty# 1)

"Lots of work got affected, routine work got affected." (Faculty# 4)

"while obtaining the accreditation, we did get affected because we have very limited manpower resources." (Manager# 1)

The fifth sub-theme was lack of proper documentation, which resulted in disorganised management of the quality process.

"We were not organised in the beginning, mainly in the aspect of documentation." (Manager# 3)

"But [we were] without the documentation, without the strategy, and without set goals and aims for the process" (Manager# 3)

"I think we were doing fine, but we did lack a lot of documentation when we were preparing for the accreditation process." (Faculty# 5)

Discussion

The current study aimed at exploring the experience of the

quality managers' and academic staff on the effectiveness and associated challenges of implementing quality assurance and accreditation processes in an undergraduate medicine programme. Quality assurance in higher education ensures students' welfare as learners are not abandoned, and the operation and outcomes of an academic programme are efficient and achievable. In the meantime, educators establish master associations with the goals of the programme and the institution.^{17,18} In KSA, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the NCAAA, is responsible for ensuring the quality of higher education programmes.¹⁹ It assists institutions in building their own ability to assess the efficiency of the quality system and their academic programmes through reviewing curricula, teaching strategies, assessment methods, and other services provided to learners and educators. Bachelor of medicine programmes are urgently required to manage quality assurance and follow certain standards to guarantee that the medical programme has met the international standards published by ECFMG and WFME.^{6,7}

In the current study, insights from quality managers and academic faculty revealed the importance of implementing quality assurance and accreditation processes. A collaborative approach is essential to ensure these processes benefit all stakeholders. The responses indicated that applying an effective quality assurance and accreditation system reflects valuable outcomes in the functioning of a medicine programme, and improves outcomes and students' satisfaction. In addition, the academic faculty members recognised that following the NCAAA standards and awarding the accreditation certificate improved the ranking of the programme and institution at the level of local and international universities. Similar studies conducted in various countries have shown that continuous quality improvement can ultimately enhance the quality of education and its outcomes.^{3,11,20-22}

In previous studies, a lack of adaptability and growth potential, along with insufficient manpower and poor market orientation, were identified as the main obstacles to implementing quality and accreditation processes.^{23,24} Similarly, in the current study, although quality assurance and accreditation processes were generally viewed positively, managers and academic faculty pointed out several challenges. To overcome these difficulties, it is recommended that a data management system be introduced to improve the academic community's participation in quality assurance and accreditation processes. The other recommendation is that the programme administration should develop a faculty development programme focussing on the imperative role

of faculty members in continuous quality improvement and accreditation.

The current study revealed that the lack of a robust quality process had also created barriers to accreditation. The findings are congruent with those of a study that included individuals who were actively engaged in the accreditation process in their organisations.²⁵

In the light of the current findings, the culture of quality assurance and accreditation processes should be emphasised within an academic institution, which is likely to improve the performance of administrators, educators, staff and students. In addition, the participation of academic faculty in the processes of quality assurance and accreditation through attending regular meetings, collecting data, and reviewing practices and documentation should be considered a part of their academic load. Also, institutions should develop a professional academic programme in quality assurance to serve the labour market and educational institutions. Graduates of such a programme would be qualified to fill the skills gap in the workforce by managing the quality assurance processes and accreditation of the national universities and having the necessary knowledge and abilities.

Given that accreditation and associated challenges are a worldwide concern, the current findings are reliable. However, the absence of additional stakeholders, such as junior educators, administrative workers, and students is a limitation of the study. Also, because the study was conducted at one college, the findings are not generalisable to other local colleges.

Conclusion

Institutional and individual characteristics can positively or negatively affect the accreditation process. However, developing an effective system of quality assurance through precise mechanisms will enhance and improve the outcomes with respect to the task of developing and implementing a quality assurance and accreditation system in an academic programme.

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Author Contribution:

HMHQ: Design, conducting the analysis, data interpretation and drafting.

SA: Concept, supported all stages of the process, review of the questionnaire, data analysis and drafting.

TAM: Utilising the analysis tools, reviewing and drafting.