

Does International Accreditation Provide for Greater Enrolment, Program Completion, Employment, and Employer Satisfaction?

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ABSTRACTS

Aim: The current research was conducted to examine the potential influence of international accreditation of universities on the enhancement of students' enrolment and educational quality, employment opportunities, and employer satisfaction. The study also contextualized the findings to focus on the case of Guyana.

Methodology: A secondary qualitative research methodology was used to conduct this research. It comprised using an inductive approach to gather and study the most contemporary and relevant secondary literature on the subject. Afterward, through thematic analysis, major qualitative finding and their patterns were segmented in the form of two major themes.

Findings: This study discovered that international accreditation benefits both business satisfaction and student satisfaction. It was discovered that the planning and self-study evaluation activities for accreditation operate as a catalyst for quality improvement practices. The results also imply that consistent efforts to satisfy requirements for international accreditation can raise the level of instruction given to pupils. It is yet unknown, though, how certification will impact Guyana's employment prospects and employee happiness.

Keywords- International, accreditation, satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the key elements in determining a person's success in life is education. A quality education from a reputable institution has never been more crucial given the rapid development of technology and the increasing degree of global competitiveness (Mok, 2015). In order to provide students with a degree that satisfies worldwide standards, international accreditation of higher education institutions has recently gained a lot of interest.

This study examines the relationship between the understudy and program enrolment, program completion, business, and manager satisfaction in advanced education foundation authorization. The review's purpose is to shed light on what a worldwide

license entails for educational quality and the results that follow.

The results of this research will make a major contribution to the continuing discussion about the value of international accreditation in higher education. Policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders will be given evidence-based insights from the findings of this study to aid them in making decisions about the future of higher education. In the end, this study aims to offer light on how international accreditation might enhance educational quality and results.

II. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Over the past 20 years, university worldwide activities have substantially increased in size, breadth,

and complexity (Mok, 2015). These initiatives include a myriad of aspects from the traditional study abroad opportunities that teach students about other cultures to providing access to higher education in nations where local institutions are unable to meet demand (de Wit, 2019). The improvement of foreign language instruction, the promotion of cross-cultural awareness and the development of students' global perspectives and abilities are all prioritized in other activities. The integration of research, the use of English as the preferred language for scientific correspondence, the expansion of the academic and scientific job markets internationally, the growth of communications firms, the use of multinational publishing, and the use of Information Technology (IT) are all effects of globalization (Jibeen et al., 2015). It facilitates communication, enabling effective knowledge selection, transmission, and preservation, and enables providers to offer academic programs based on e-learning.

Owing to the globalization of higher education and the role of the IT sector in it, an entire domain of international accreditation of universities has emerged. The term "international accreditation of universities" describes the evaluation and approval of institutions of higher learning by independent, international accrediting organizations (Ramirez et al., 2014). These accrediting bodies assign universities ratings based on a variety of criteria, including the standard of their academic offerings, the degree of experience of the staff, their student services, and their physical facilities (Knight, 2015). A thorough evaluation process that considers several factors is typically part of the accreditation process.

A worldwide license is crucial for colleges because it ensures that they uphold the highest standards of excellence and value on a global scale (Henard et al., 2012). Students, parents, and employers who base their decisions about education and employment on the reputations of universities may use it as a quality control tool. Universities' standing and reputation among academics can be improved via accreditation, which can help them attract and keep students (Joseph, 2012). However, other researchers such as Rasche et al. (2015) contend that international accreditation may not be as significant as is believed. The accreditation process, according to critics, can be subjective and may not accurately reflect the calibre of instruction provided by institutions. Additionally, they mention that certain accrediting bodies could not have the expertise necessary to evaluate schools fairly or they might have conflicts of interest.

III. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The current research aims to investigate whether international accreditation of universities plays

a role in the enhancement of its quality. To achieve this aim, the study revolves around the following objectives:

- To assess the role of international accreditation of universities on student enrolment and program completion by students
- To investigate the influence of international accreditation of universities on employment opportunities and employer satisfaction.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education is a crucial tool for supporting the country's equitable growth, according to Sheikh (2017). It is an essential component that enhances a person's perspective on global concerns and helps them grow their competence in a specific field at various times of their lives. Fernandes and Singh (2022) place particular emphasis in one of their articles on the assessment of the Indian university certification and ranking system and its efficacy in raising academic quality for a respectable position in global quality accreditation and ranking. The author claims that working with businesses, doing research, and teaching are necessary to get certification and a high ranking on the world stage. In a study article, Lagrosen (2017) investigated the relationship between business school accreditation and student involvement. The author found that students will participate more actively in academics and perform better if the institutes are authorized. In the end, it was determined that accreditation had a favourable impact on student engagement and participation.

Economic researchers have utilized Rosen's (1974) invention of hedonic pricing regressions to deduce how a good or service's attributes affect customer preferences (Greenstone, 2017). This method is inappropriate for the setting of higher education since it is based on several assumptions. For instance, even though tuition rates are often fixed, and markets are not always completely competitive, hedonic price regressions assume that prices are movable. As a result, enrolment or application data are used in higher education literature to assess changes in students' access to information (Jacqmin et al., 2021). The expense of applying to universities and capacity difficulties are two additional constraints on these institution-specific solutions (e.g., it takes time to complete multiple forms or there is an application fee) (Mujuni et al., 2015). For instance, prestigious foundations that expand will not necessarily receive more applications as a result, as excellent (as opposed to flawless) students may anticipate a decline in their chances of admission.

Nguyen et al. (2018) study examined the significance of quality accreditation and assurance in Vietnam's higher education system. The study discovered that higher education institutions may achieve quality assurance by ongoing self-evaluation and the addition of internal or external independent

certifying groups. Nguyen and Ta (2018) claim that accreditation not only raised the course's calibre but also helped staff and students feel more confident. If higher education wishes to be a leader in education, the author contends that it must regularly evaluate and accredit the quality of its courses and programs (Pathak and Pawar, 2022). For educational institutions to successfully achieve high levels of independence, stability, and faith, ongoing internal quality assurance process improvement is required.

AACSB, EQUIS, and AMBA are three major worldwide accreditations for business schools that Julien Jacqmin et al. (2021) examined to see how they impact student preferences as seen by enrolment decisions. The authors use data gathered by the central clearinghouse that distributes students to schools to create a relative preference indicator focused on the French context for comparing schools. The data shows that all three credentials have a considerable and advantageous impact on the student, whereas, the AACSB license has the most benefit (Jacqmin et al., 2021). According to the publication *L'étudiant*, earning an AACSB certification is comparable to moving up four positions, whereas earning an EQUIS or AMBA accreditation is equivalent to moving up two positions (Carton et al., 2018). The study also found a strong "triple crown" impact, which suggests that the three accreditations frequently complement one another.

Williams et al. (2021) examined the ranking and enrolment of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the US. They used several statistical tests, including Mann-Whitney U tests and ANOVA tests, to examine the association between accreditation, rankings, and enrolments. Higher ranks, enrolments, and AACSB accreditation all showed a positive association, according to their study. The statistical relationship between rankings or enrolment and ACBSP accreditation was absent, on the other side. The impact of IACBE accreditation was uncertain, prompting more research. These results suggest that AACSB accreditation can improve the standing and enrolment of HBCUs, however, ACBSP certification would not provide the same benefits. However, the study's biggest flaw is the lack of any analysis of the connection between rankings, enrolment, and modifications in AACSB certification. Meanwhile, Eyadhy and Alenezi (2021) investigated the impact of external academic certification on student satisfaction in the Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) course at King Saud University. Their study employed a before-after comparative research technique to assess retrospective quantitative secondary data. The results demonstrated a connection between increased student satisfaction levels and both accreditation cycles (Eyadhy and Alenezi, 2021). The improvement lasted after the first accreditation cycle for a while and was maintained above the baseline until just before the second accreditation round. However, the rise in the median

student satisfaction score did not continue into the post-secondary accreditation cycle year. The planning phase activities and progress through the self-study evaluation, according to the authors, are crucial catalysts for quality improvement practices connected to certification.

V. METHODOLOGY

5.1. Research design

Since the current research covers a wide scope, a qualitative research design is selected to investigate the data and form conclusions. A qualitative research approach aims to determine the whys and hows of the phenomena being studied (unlike quantitative) (Yilmaz et al., 2013). Since its results are expressed in writing rather than mathematically, qualitative research is frequently classified as subjective (as opposed to objective). Any qualitative study should be carried out largely to learn a great deal about a particular issue, challenge, or meaning based on human experience (Yilmaz et al., 2013). This is done by employing a small but concentrated sample base since the data collection regarding the accreditation of universities would have taken considerable time and since qualitative data is more interested in depth than the number of findings. A qualitative research approach aimed at determining the underlying reasons for the phenomena being studied.

5.2. Research approach

Apart from the design of this research, an inductive research approach is adopted, and data is gathered and analysed to create new hypotheses or conceptions based on the data's findings (Liu, 2016). The researchers are investigating how external academic accreditation affects student satisfaction in this study. The data gathered from the literature regarding student satisfaction scores before and after the certification cycles may be analysed by the researchers using an inductive technique to generate novel ideas and hypotheses about how accreditation affects student satisfaction.

The inductive method is appropriate for this study since it enables the researchers to develop novel ideas that would not have been obvious before the study's execution (Liu, 2016). It enables the researchers to have a thorough grasp of the student's experiences and investigate how the students' satisfaction is affected by external academic accreditation. As a result, the inductive method is a good fit for this study.

Data collection and analysis:

A thorough analysis of the pertinent literature was carried out to collect secondary data for this investigation. The researchers looked for and gathered the most recent scholarly books, articles, and publications on the international accreditation of higher education institutions. Afterward, a thematic analysis technique was used to carefully examine the chosen literature to decipher the contradictions and overlaps in the findings. This technique may be used to identify the

key themes and ideas of the study topic. To undertake an objective and rigorous review of the literature to identify trends and topics, thematic analysis is a particularly effective research strategy (Clarke et al., 2015). It also enables the identification of literary trends and connections between various variables. The data are categorized into various topics using the thematic analysis technique, which entails finding patterns or themes within the data (Clarke et al., 2015). The major ideas and connections between the themes were then determined through analysis of the topics. The application of thematic analysis enables the discovery of significant patterns and topics in the literature as well as research gaps that require more study.

VI. FINDINGS

Theme 01: Role of international accreditation of universities on students' enrolment and completion of education:

Analysis of literature from various higher education institutions in this domain found that while

international accreditation is a complex framework, it does have a positive influence on students' choices for that program or university. The study of Eyadhy and Alenezi (2021) showed that average student satisfaction ratings before and after the first certification cycle were 3.46/5 (0.35) and 3.71 (0.39), respectively, with a P-value of 0.001. The effect of the post-first accreditation cycle was maintained above the baseline from the pre-first accreditation cycle till the pre-second accreditation cycle after being sustained for several years. The effect size was in the middle of the range, as determined by Cohen's d test. The average student satisfaction scores over the pre-and post-secondary accrediting periods were 3.57/5 (0.30) and 3.70 (0.34), respectively, with a P-value of 0.04 (Eyadhy and Alenezi, 2021). The post-second accreditation cycle year did not see an increase in the mean score of student satisfaction rates in comparison to the first certification cycle. The effect magnitude fell within the restricted range of Cohen's d test. The results are shown in the following figure 1:

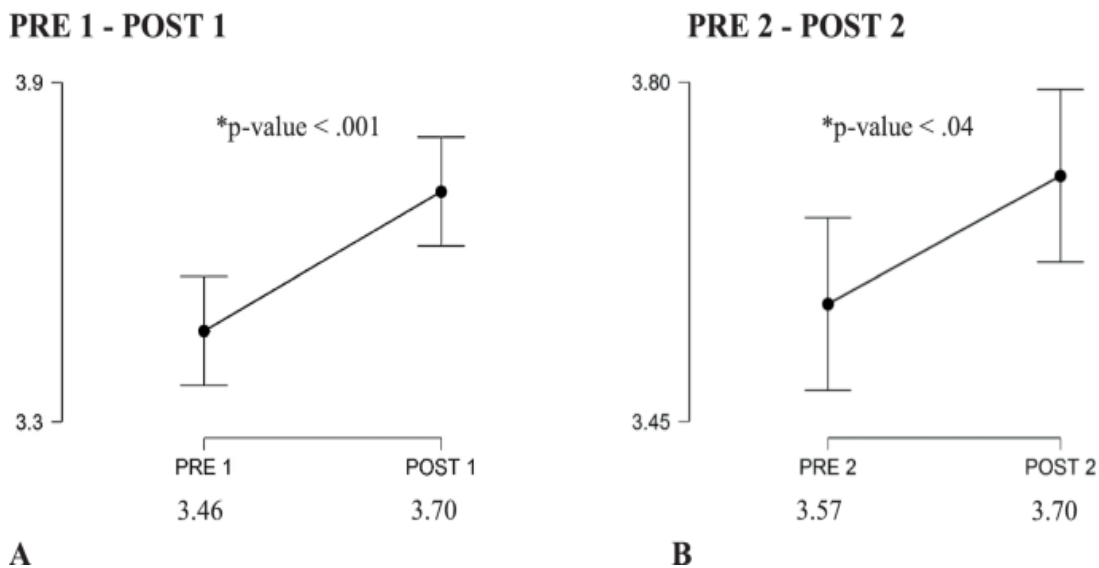


Figure 1. Paired t-test comparing the mean student satisfaction before the first accreditation cycle (PRE1) and after (POST1); before the second accrediting cycle (PRE2) and after (POST2) (Eyadhy and Alenezi, 2021).

According to Zanten's analysis (2023), the CAAM-HP's decision to revoke UG's accreditation was a potent statement that led to a transformation in Guyana. The growing economy of Guyana allowed medical schools to obtain more resources. According to sources, the Guyana parliament pledged GUY\$109.6 million, or more than 500,000 USD, in August 2016 to fund the re-accreditation effort (Zanten, 2023). The 2016 site visit report listed several planned changes, including a concerted effort to adopt a staff development program and a new curriculum that will be introduced in the 2017/2018 academic year (Zanten, 2023). Positive improvements were also facilitated by the power of the new bad habit chancellor, dignitary, and clinical leader.

The study of Zanten (2021) compared the USMLE performance of UG students and graduates during the two years of 2017 to 2018 to all IMGs who graduated from overseas medical schools during the same time. The Step 1 pass rate for UG students and graduates was lower than that of their IMG counterparts (basic science). However, for four years, the first attempt pass rate for UG students and graduates rose from 46.7% (2015–2016) to 72% (2017–2018) (Figure 2). UG students in 2017–2018 had greater Step 2 CK (Clinical Knowledge) and Step 2 CS (Clinical Skills) pass rates than all IMGs. None of the UG students failed the clinical skills test based on their performance in 2017–2018 (Zanten, 2023). (Step 2 CS). One out of thirteen

students or graduates (or 7.7%) failed the clinical knowledge test (Step 1 CK) the first time they took it (Figure 2). Thus, the rise in students' achievement is

found to be directly associated with students' completion of the program as well.

	UG	All IMGs
Step 1 (Basic Science)	72.0% (n=18) (n total=25)	79.2% (n=23,137) (n total=29,218)
Step 2 (Clinical Knowledge)	92.3% (n=12) (n total=13)	83.6% (n=19,105) (n total=22,850)
Step 2 (Clinical Skills)	100% (n=15) (n total=15)	77.6% (n=17,559) n total=22,615)

Figure 2. Improvements in students' outcomes after accreditation (Zanten, 2023).

It has been demonstrated that the number of students who enroll in and complete their studies in Guyana is greatly influenced by the international accreditation of universities (Allahar et al., 2018). When accredited schools and courses are accessible, both students and their families feel more secure, especially those who are considering studying abroad or seeking employment opportunities overseas (Zanten, 2023). Since they are confident they will obtain a high-quality education and that their degrees will be recognized all around the world, students frequently pick accredited curricula. According to the National Accreditation Council-Guyana (NAC) the number of students enrolling in approved institutions and programs has been steadily increasing in recent years. (NAC) (Allahar et al., 2018). This is a result of the NAC's initiatives to support accreditation and encourage institutions to apply for international accreditation.

Theme 02: Role of international accreditation of universities on employment opportunities and employer satisfaction:

A wide number of factors in higher education are impacted by accreditation, including student enrolment, academic status, internationalization, research and innovation, teaching efficacy, and employability Rios et al. (2021) examined the effect, added value, and application of a certification approach on quality assurance in architectural higher education. With 85% of respondents evaluating this influence as high or mid-high, it was found that all three of the studied categories had high opinions of the degree to which certification affects quality. However, students and graduates had the greatest judgments. These figures were 72% for educators and 65% for business owners (Figure 3) (Rios et al., 2021). The portfolio is extremely or very crucial, according to 69% of employers, in the decision to hire a candidate.

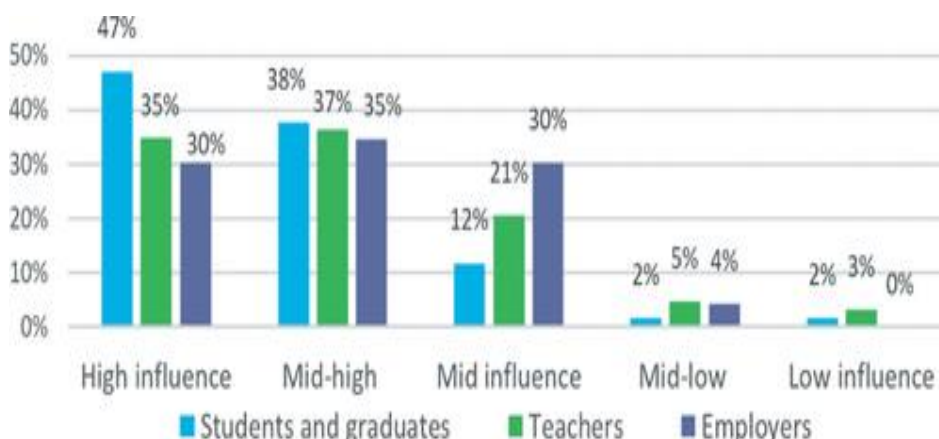


Figure 3. Perceived quality of education due to accreditation (Rios et al.,2021).

There is a dearth of information on how international accreditation of Guyanese's universities influences employment prospects and employer satisfaction. However, research indicates that international accreditation can benefit graduates' employability and employers' satisfaction. According to McGrath and Gu (2015), graduates from globally recognized institutions in Guyana had a higher chance of

landing a job and earning a higher salary than graduates from unaccredited universities. This demonstrates how global certification boosts graduates' employability and provides assurance of high-quality education. Additionally, firms in Guyana's healthcare sector prefer to recruit graduates from universities with a strong international reputation, according to a poll by the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in

Medicine and Other Health Professions (CAAM-HP) (Latchem, 2016). The report also showed that the level of satisfaction of employers with graduates' performance was significantly influenced by the university's accreditation status.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study found that international accreditation has a favourable effect on both the satisfaction levels of companies and students. It was found that the activities included in the accreditation's planning phase and self-study evaluation catalysed quality improvement practices. The findings also suggest that regular attempts to meet international accreditation standards may improve the calibre of education provided to students. However, it is still unclear how certification will affect employment opportunities and employee satisfaction in Guyana. Decision-makers, college presidents, and academic staff in Guyana and other countries trying to improve the standard of their educational offerings should take note of the study's implications. These parties must contribute the necessary resources and recognize the importance of international certification as a technique of quality assurance to appropriately prepare for accreditation reviews. More research is needed to determine the long-term benefits of accreditation on students' employability and employer satisfaction.

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