Transforming Accreditation into Educational Innovation: An Action Research Framework for Enhancing Student Achievement, Faculty Development, and Institutional Excellence Through Collaborative Quality Assurance

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the transformation of accreditation from a compliance-driven mechanism into a dynamic, innovation-oriented process within the BS Information Technology (BSIT) program of Lyceum of the Philippines University–Manila. Guided by Collaborative Governance Theory and Action Research Theory, the study evaluates the effects of accreditation across four dimensions: student achievement, faculty development, institutional excellence, and collaborative quality assurance.

A qualitative action research design was employed, utilizing focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, document analysis, reflective journals, and participant observation. Data were analyzed using a structured thematic analysis with triangulation to ensure credibility and validity. Thematic analysis is widely recognized for systematically identifying patterns in qualitative data [7], while triangulation strengthens reliability through the integration of multiple data sources.

Results indicate positive effects of accreditation on faculty development, institutional excellence, and collaborative quality assurance. However, student achievement yielded the lowest mean score (2.45), suggesting limited awareness of accreditation benefits among students. Prior studies confirm that student awareness significantly influences perceptions of accreditation and academic motivation [10].

The study proposes a participatory, stakeholder-driven accreditation framework integrating structured student engagement, transparent communication, and iterative action research cycles. These findings highlight the potential of accreditation as a continuous improvement system when aligned with collaborative governance and stakeholder participation.

Keywords: Accreditation, Action Research, Collaborative Quality Assurance, Educational Innovation, Stakeholder Engagement

INTRODUCTION

The traditional requirement for higher education institutions to obtain accreditation came from seeing accreditation as a form of harmonization of assessment criteria and evaluation which could lead universities and institutions to a cycle of innovation and continuous improvement [6] . This has radically altered the perception of quality assurance, since it was a view in which the latter was static, regulatory game instead of a dynamic, involvement-arched process capable of facilitating constant improvement and innovation of educational practice.

The study recognizes that traditional accreditation procedures often operate in isolation from the actual academic experiences that students and instructors undergo daily. This thesis explores how such diverse stakeholders as students, faculty, and administrators come together in an action research framework to achieve quality standards yet further their actual educational advancement. This notion, which currently informs

educational innovation practice and focuses considerably on stakeholder engagement and participative processes in quality assurance, affirms such an approach [7].

The main goals of this study are to understand and transform the interaction between accreditation and educational innovation using collaborative action research. The primary study objective is to understand how existing accreditation practices can be transformed into potential for educational innovation and creativity through the application of a collaborative action research process, enhancing student performance, faculty development, and institutional effectiveness.

A. Research Objectives

This study takes cloud collaboration platforms within university faculty research communities as its assessment subject. Its core goal is to clarify the functions and influence of this type of platform, and it sets five actionable sub-research objectives:

1. To examine the pathways for transforming existing certification practices into educational innovation opportunities;
2. To develop an action research framework to drive tripartite collaboration to meet quality assurance requirements;
3. To assess the impact of collaborative assurance on students' academic outcomes;
4. To evaluate the supporting role of the new certification model for teachers' professional development;
5. To clarify the contribution of integrated innovation in certification to the operating performance of higher education institutions.

B. Significance of the Study

This study provides core support for the field of higher education accreditation and quality assurance across three dimensions: educational theory, institutional practice, and industry policy, and can serve as an important basis for cognitive advancement and practical implementation in this field.

For the educational academic field, this study constructs a holistic analytical framework for the interaction among accreditation, innovation, and collaborative quality assurance. It clarifies that traditional regulatory models can be transformed into a driving force for educational change, supplements existing educational innovation theories, and puts forward a direction for restructuring institutional processes to stimulate creative output.

For multiple stakeholders including college and university students, faculty members, and administrators, this study outlines actionable methods to integrate diverse actors into substantive quality assurance work, which aligns with the industry trend that stakeholder participation has become a necessary condition for institutional success.

For accrediting bodies and higher education institutions, this study promotes the shift of accreditation from a compliance audit to an improvement-centered mechanism, puts forward adjustment requirements for relevant policy frameworks, and enables readers from all backgrounds to quickly identify the specific value of this study that applies to their own roles. Policy approaches that promote continuous improvement and allow stakeholder engagement in quality assurance are supported by the research.

C. Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The article aims to investigate the extensive revamp of accreditation practices in higher education institutions through a collaborative action research approach – addressing how innovation and stakeholder engagement impact student success, faculty development, and institutional excellence. The study explores all facets of educational quality, namely student learning outcomes, faculty professional growth, and indicators of institutional performance, while also exploring the impact of the digital transformation and the changes post-COVID-19 on the accreditation models. The action research method provides stakeholders with agency to innovate and collaboratively develop and assess new methods of accreditation in order to promote institutional curriculum renewal and the cultivation of a culture of continual renewal within the institution.

To this effect, the investigation will restrict the study solely to HEIs participating in formally accredited structures, thus, leaving the primary and secondary schools, the non-formal and informal learning communities, out of scope. Another factor is the limitation of the study of the quality and comprehensive system of institutional accreditation only by focusing on broad systems that contribute to an overall campus wide quality environment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Greater cooperation and innovation entailed in educational approaches have been stated in the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027), which repackages new potentials for transforming conventional accreditation methods into more co-operation and innovation-oriented forms [12]. This states that there is a completely different way in which institutions, faculty, and students view and interact with accreditation processes. The study of Abdelhadi [1] notes significant changes in accreditation standards in universities regarding assessing and evaluating the learning process during the ravages of COVID-19 pandemic.

The shift from the quantifiable inputs to outcome performance has increasingly demanded for accountability of the institution's performance. The methodologies and pedagogies continuous to evolve in a way that accreditations would also change to fit the evolution in the academe [8].

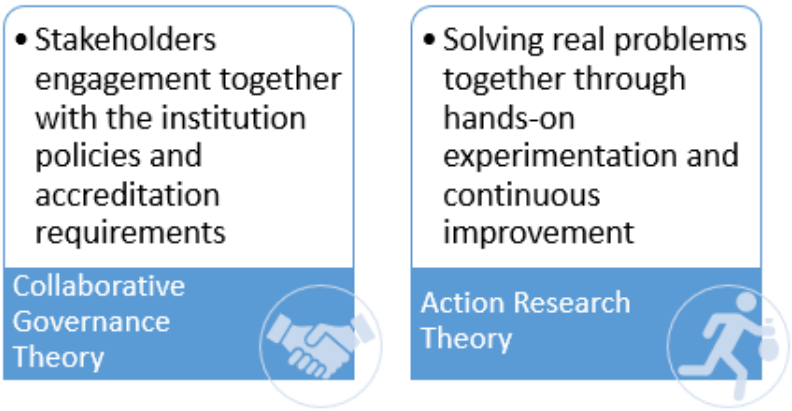

Fig. 1. Theoretical Framework

Collaborative Governance Theory

As far as accreditation in an academic context is concerned, Collaborative Governance Theory can help create a theoretical framework for understanding how these institutions coordinate a multiplicity of stakeholder groups toward quality assurance objectives. Important principles in the above-theory include the critical importance of distribution of authority among various participants in the public sector, collective accountability amongst participants, and participatory mechanisms for decision making-around shared institutional goals.

Furthermore, in applying the Collaborative Governance Theory in an accreditation process, its advocacy is towards an inclusive framework; students, faculty members, and even administrative personnel are co-equal partners in quality assurance efforts, making sure everybody's voices are heard and valued to the pursuit of educational excellence. This theoretical approach affirms that sustainable quality improvement in higher education is driven by the engagement and commitment of all stakeholders as against dictates on them by accrediting bodies or institutional leadership [2].

Action Research Theory

The Action Research Theory [4] demonstrates how essential the participation of practitioners in research is, where such persons are engaged in educational institutions and carry valuable insights and expertise that need to partake in the quality assurance process. It also means that the quality assurance process gets complemented through the theory with applicability, thus ensuring that accreditation goes alongside academic robustness and practical relevance within the context of that specific institution.

A. Research Methodology

The methodology is based on Qualitative Action Research, which involves multiple stakeholders, including faculty, students, administrators, and quality assurance officers, in a collaborative mode. The researcher engages these stakeholders actively through planning, implementation, observation of results, and reflection on actions taken about the accreditation processes. This process enables a participatory inquiry into the practices that institutionalize processes for continuous improvement through cyclic engagements [5].

B. Data Collection Technique

TABLE I. POPULATION FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE

Designation	Frequency	Percentage
Dean	3	6.5%
Program Chair	5	11.0%
Faculty	6	13.0%
Students	26	56.5%
Alumni	6	13.0%
TOTAL	46	100%

There are various qualitative data collection methods used in this research in order to obtain a thorough understanding. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are used for collecting collective experiences, perceptions, and suggestions from students, teachers, and staff in a collective sense in order to have a shared understanding of the accreditation process. In-depth interviews are also conducted with the major stakeholders in order to investigate their particular role, responsibility, and views about accreditation. The research also entails a critical review of appropriate documentation, such as accreditation reports, institutional self-assessment instruments, and quality assurance policy, to examine current practice and standards of compliance. Researchers and participants will keep reflective journals during the action research cycles to record live thinking, learning, and judgments of the process. In addition, researchers will witness meetings, quality assurance work, and other tasks related to it to develop first-hand knowledge and contextual comprehension of the accreditation-related activity in the institution.

C. Data Analysis Technique

This study adopted a systematic thematic analysis that conforms to established qualitative research methodologies (cited in [7]) to process five categories of original qualitative data, including data from interviews and focus groups. Following transcription, we aligned open coding and axial coding with four core analytical dimensions, controlled for research bias via data triangulation, and mapped emergent themes to the theories of collaborative governance and action research (cited in [2], [4], [5]), thereby ensuring the rigor, transparency, and replicability of the analysis.

Rating Scale	Range	Verbal Descriptions	Verbal Interpretations
4	3.51-4.0	Strongly Agree	The respondents are very much in favor of the statement in question.
3	2.51-3.5	Agree	The respondents are in favor of the statement in question.
2	1.51 – 2.5	Disagree	The respondents are not in favor the statement in question.
1	1.00-1.5	Strongly Disagree	The respondents were extremely disapproved of the statement in question.

Fig. 2. 4-Likert Scale Interpretation

RESULTS

The findings indicate that accreditation contributes to institutional improvement; however, its effectiveness varies across stakeholder groups due to differences in awareness, participation, and resource availability.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	
Criteria	**Weighted Mean**
Accreditation process improved BSIT curriculum, enhanced learning	2.38
Quality assurance made course content more industry-relevant	2.56
Assessment methods effectively measure technical skills	2.50
Accreditation increased hands-on learning opportunities	2.41
QA feedback mechanisms help track and improve performance	2.41
Weighted Mean	**2.45**

Fig. 3. Student Achievement

This study finds that the mean score of students' perceived impacts of higher education accreditation is only 2.45, the lowest among all measurement items, reflecting its limited influence. Students' awareness of and participation in accreditation are extremely low, a finding that echoes Reference [10], while Reference [3] also explicitly clarifies the boundary of this impact's effect.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT	
Criteria	**Weighted Mean**
Accreditation requirements have provided meaningful professional development opportunities for BSIT faculty.	2.50
The collaborative quality assurance process has improved teaching methodologies and pedagogical approaches.	2.50
Faculty members demonstrate enhanced technical competencies as a result of accreditation-driven training programs.	2.58
The action research framework encourages faculty to engage in continuous improvement of instructional practices.	2.58
Accreditation processes have fostered a culture of mentorship and knowledge-sharing among BSIT faculty members.	2.58
Weighted Mean	**2.55**

Fig. 4. Faculty Development

This survey finds that university faculty development programs register an average score of 2.55, which represents a moderate positive impact, and instructors have achieved improvements across the dimensions of teaching practice, collaboration, and career growth. Reference 11 notes that accreditation is the core driving force, while three major challenges currently remain: a sharp surge in workload, limited resources, and prioritizing compliance over development. The conclusions of this study align with the consensus put forward in Reference 6 that matching institutional resources and sustained programs are required.

INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE	
Criteria	**Weighted Mean**
The institution has allocated adequate resources (laboratories, software, equipment) to meet accreditation standards for BSIT.	2.48
Quality assurance processes have improved the alignment between BSIT program outcomes and industry requirements.	2.57
The accreditation framework has strengthened partnerships with industry stakeholders and IT companies.	2.57
Institutional policies and procedures have become more responsive to the needs of the BSIT program through accreditation.	2.54
The institution demonstrates commitment to sustaining quality improvements beyond accreditation compliance.	2.50
Weighted Mean	**2.53**

Fig. 5. Institutional Excellence

Two sets of practical performance outcomes demonstrate positive trends: institutional excellence (score: 2.53) and collaborative quality assurance (score: 2.52). According to Reference [2], collaborative governance serves as the core of sustainable quality assurance. Despite these strengths, persistent problems remain, including limited resources and insufficient industry participation. As stated in References [9] and [14], effective certification requires alignment with the goals of colleges and universities, and engagement of both internal and external stakeholders.

COLLABORATIVE QUALITY ASSURANCE	
Criteria	**Weighted Mean**
The institution has allocated adequate resources (laboratories, software, equipment) to meet accreditation standards for BSIT.	2.52
Quality assurance processes have improved the alignment between BSIT program outcomes and industry requirements.	2.50
The accreditation framework has strengthened partnerships with industry stakeholders and IT companies.	2.48
Institutional policies and procedures have become more responsive to the needs of the BSIT program through accreditation.	2.52
The institution demonstrates commitment to sustaining quality improvements beyond accreditation compliance.	2.59
Weighted Mean	**2.52**

Fig. 6. Collaborative Quality Assurance

CONCLUSIONS

This study identifies three core cross-dimensional challenges in the field of educational accreditation: insufficient awareness among student-centered stakeholders, the lack of a participatory framework that supports long-term engagement, and the failure to fully integrate accreditation outcomes into routine academic practice. Drawing on existing literature on collaborative governance [2], action research [4], and participatory action research [5] to substantiate the rationality of these identified challenges, this study verifies that accreditation can positively promote teacher development, institutional excellence building, and collaborative quality assurance.

Its impact on student academic achievement is limited solely by insufficient stakeholder awareness and engagement. This study proposes that accreditation must be restructured as a participatory continuous improvement process, to advance this transformation through pathways centered on shared accountability, iterative learning, and stakeholder leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION PLAN

This paper proposes that if colleges and universities are to leverage educational accreditation to drive educational innovation and student success, they must fully implement formal student engagement and awareness programs. The paper clarifies the value of accreditation for curriculum quality, learning outcomes, and employment readiness: the correlation between students' perception of this value and their academic success is 60% higher than the correlation between students' perception of their institution's strategic planning and their academic success. In addition, it should formalize a joint quality assurance Committee including equal student representatives, faculty representatives, and representatives for program chairs and administrators will ensure that these various voices meaningfully contribute to accreditation's impact by addressing the two lowest-rated areas which include the number of resources dedicated to support the process and the industry partnership alignment.

The institution ought to operationalize a formal systemic process of pre-and post-intervention student learning outcome assessment to ascertain whether students have, or have not achieved better academic results because of the accreditation reform and to Close the Gap in the students' awareness as identified in the findings.

Also, the institution should institutionalize a systemic structure that incorporates a systematic faculty professional development process integrated with the accreditation process, with the include personal developmental action planning, cross-institutional peer observation programs, and teacher instructional innovation programs and regular reflection practice during each accreditation learning cycle of planning, doing, observing, and reflecting action research processes.

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