



NAVIGATING THE QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS THROUGH QUALITY ASSURANCE: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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Abstract:

This study examined how higher education institutions (HEIs) navigated accreditation, addressed challenges and sustained quality assurance. A qualitative multiple-case study design was used involving six HEIs from the Davao region who were purposively selected. Key institutional representatives who were directly involved in the accreditation process were interviewed, and data gathered were analyzed using thematic and cross-case analysis. Findings revealed that institutions pursued accreditation to meet standards, improve quality, develop a quality assurance culture, and strengthen competitiveness and stakeholder responsiveness. Challenges in leadership, workload, documentation, resources, readiness and resistance were addressed through strategic leadership, collaboration, documentation systems, capacity building and continuous improvement. Insights showed that accreditation can be considered as an institutionalized process that integrates quality assurance into an organizational culture. The cross-case analysis revealed strong similarities across six cases, indicating that accreditation was commonly experienced as a shared, continuous, and systems-based process aimed at institutional development. The study recommends that higher education institutions institutionalize the accreditation process supported by strategic planning, effective leadership, collaborative governance, systematic documentation and continuous monitoring for institutional improvement and global competitiveness.

Keywords: educational management, private higher education institutions, qualitative research, multiple case study, University of Mindanao, Philippines

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1. Introduction

Quality assurance plays an important role in the operations and development of many higher education institutions (HEIs). It offers a road map for improvement of academic programs, institutional processes, and overall performance of the institution. However, there are still HEIs that continue to struggle to maintain quality assurance systems. Addas (2020) noted that accreditation helps develop curriculum and align it with the labour market, but it is hampered by faculty resistance and a lack of awareness.

Furthermore, the problem in accreditation becomes visible when it is faced with limited resources, weak communication, and a lack of personal participation. Iqbal (2023) found that despite efforts of institutions to meet quality standards, strengthening leadership commitment and insufficient staff training are essential. According to Mydagmaa (2022), institutions involved in the accreditation faced difficulties with resource distribution, stakeholder engagement, and the implementation of internal quality assurance practices. Although these institutions aimed for excellence, certification remains a global problem in higher education.

Despite the recognized significance of accreditation, some HEIs cannot meet its requirements. Burnett (2022) asserts that colleges facing accreditation sanctions have suffered decreased enrollment and suggests that accreditation status influences public perceptions. Accordingly, Aguiar (2026) found that accreditation may have long-term effects on graduates' labor-market outcomes, particularly on wages, but these may vary depending on sectoral conditions, labor-market demand, and institutional contexts. Therefore, during the accreditation process, colleges are expected to meet the required quality standards for curricula, the qualifications of instructors, necessary facilities, and student outcomes.

Moreover, accreditation helps boost the credibility of the institution by assessing whether a program or the institution complies with quality standards. Cagape and Prado (2025) found that accreditation contributes to improvements in teacher qualifications, admissions standards, staff training, faculty performance, and institutional reputation. In the same manner, Albaroudi *et al.* (2023) found that students evaluate accredited programs more positively in terms of the services and activities provided. Thus, it can be concluded that accreditation contributes to improving the institution and stakeholders' confidence.

In addition, quality assurance supports sustainability in the long run. According to Torres (2022), accreditation-related activities help educational institutions build a culture of quality. Pham *et al.* (2022) also emphasize the role of quality assurance, as educational institutions must use its results to improve teaching, learning, and continuous quality improvement. While the generally implemented accredited programs were successful, as per Bayartsogt (2022), improvements are needed in resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and the implementation of continuous internal quality assurance processes.

Despite the many benefits of accreditation, some HEIs still encounter difficulties such as leadership, budget constraints, and stakeholder coordination resistance from academic staff in implementing accreditation processes (Claudio, 2023). While HEIs implement accreditation to improve the quality and institutions' performance, accreditation still entails some problems with operation and continuous development.

Furthermore, institutions with unaccredited programs could suffer from low enrolment, poor educational outcomes, lower reputational standing, and slow progress in quality improvement. This was stated in the study of Pham *et al.* (2022) that although a quality assurance framework is in place, educational institutions did not effectively use the assessment results to improve their program quality. Hence, the loss or weakening of accreditation status may negatively impact the institution's reputation and competitiveness. Burnett (2022) argued that institutions under accreditation warning or probation have lower enrolments, suggesting that accreditation can serve as an indicator of the quality of the institution.

Consequently, accreditation may not necessarily bring improvements in institutional processes, academic quality, student services, or stakeholder satisfaction. This depends on whether the institutions were able to effectively evaluate the results and integrate quality assurance into their regular practice. Hence, Pham *et al.* (2022) stressed that quality assurance is effective if institutions use assessment results to improve academic programs and student support.

Furthermore, the impact of accreditation on quality assurance has led the literature to emphasize that it should be viewed as more than a mere compliance requirement. Duarte and Vardasca (2023) explained the importance of external accreditation to evaluate whether institutions meet the established standards. This external validation provides formal evidence of quality that would strengthen institutional accountability and support continuous improvement of academic programs and services. Also, Torres (2022) points out that institutions involved in the accreditation process have a role in encouraging a culture of quality.

This study is based on several theories to support how HEIs pursue accreditation as a path to quality assurance and institutional excellence, and is mainly anchored in Expectancy-Value Theory, with Systems Theory and Contingency Theory as supporting theories. The first theory is the Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), which was developed by John Atkinson and later expanded by Jacquelynne Eccles and Allan Wigfield. The theory explains that people are more likely to participate in an activity when they believe they can succeed and the outcomes are valuable (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). In the context of accreditation, administrators and faculty are more likely to participate in accreditation when they are confident in their ability to meet accreditation requirements and recognize the benefits of accreditation for quality and continuous improvement. The theory suggests that HEIs' motivation to succeed in the accreditation process stems from the institution's belief in its ability to meet quality standards (expectancy) and the importance it places on accreditation as a valuable goal (value) (Spott, 2022). Indeed, motivation is

influenced by expectations of success, perceived benefits, and possible costs (Eccles & Wigfield, 2024; Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023)

The second theory is Systems Theory, which was founded in 1937 by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, whose major works were published in 1946. In this theory, the organization is treated as interconnected parts linked to achieve the goal. It emphasizes the importance of cooperation and coordination within the organization to address challenges (Pesut *et al.*, 2023). Hence, this theory is relevant to the study since accreditation requires collaboration among administrators, faculty members, and stakeholders. It suggests that inadequate communication, limited resources, or poor coordination may adversely affect other departments and hinder the successful implementation of accreditation.

Lastly, the Contingency Theory was developed by Fred Fiedler in the 1960s. This theory states that a single leadership or management scheme fits all occasions. The effectiveness of a leader depends on how well his leadership style aligns with the particulars of his institution, including organizational culture, challenges, and resources (Peng *et al.*, 2024). This theory supports the study because the participating HEIs may use different strategies depending on their size, experience, leadership style, and available resources. In terms of accreditation, educational institutions face diverse challenges, varying standards, and unique internal and external environments.

Furthermore, fulfilling requirements set by the regulatory accrediting bodies, it provides HEIs with a chance to evaluate different practices that determine their performance. Javed and Alenezi (2023) defined accreditation as a process aimed at evaluating educational institutions to ensure compliance with established requirements. In the same manner, Serrano *et al.* (2025) emphasized that the success of quality assurance largely depends on management support, adequate infrastructure, and the active participation of teachers and learners.

Additionally, accreditation served as a foundation for international recognition, positioning institutions with global standards of excellence. According to the study conducted by Cagape and Prado (2025), it was clear that students and faculty were satisfied with teacher qualifications, fair admissions, and staff training, which were all aligned with the objectives of the institution. Faculty performance and the school's reputation improved because of accreditation. Also, strong infrastructure and institutional support were factors in quality education. However, accreditation also brought challenges like heavier workloads for staff.

Similarly, a quality culture in an institution enhances accreditation by fostering the understanding that quality assurance is every institution's responsibility. A study by Savickienė and Pilkienė (2026), quality culture encompasses structural elements, cultural values, stakeholder involvement, and continuous improvement. Likewise, Cagape and Prado (2025) found in their research that PACUCOA accreditation led to improvements in faculty performance, improved school reputation, and student and faculty satisfaction. Thus, it can be concluded that recent research supports the idea that accreditation and quality assurance aid the progress of universities when based on the principles of

adequate leadership and evidence, stakeholder involvement, and long-term improvement.

Although previous studies have examined the importance, benefits, and challenges of accreditation in higher education, there are limited studies focusing on HEIs, particularly in the local region. This study addresses this gap by exploring how HEIs navigate the accreditation process, operational challenges that HEIs face, and strategies to sustain institutional improvement. The study is timely because many institutions in the region are currently undergoing accreditation, and the results of this study can provide adequate strategies for sustaining educational quality and meeting national and international standards.

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to examine the experiences of HEIs in the Davao region on how they manage the accreditation process, the challenges they encounter and the strategies they used to address such issues. It also sought to deepen understanding of accreditation as a mechanism for external quality assurance (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023) and the role of internal quality assurance in supporting the improvement of academic programs (Pham *et al.*, 2022).

Accordingly, the study explored how higher education institutions experienced and navigated the accreditation process, including their institutional and operational challenges, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the insights and best practices developed by the institutions from their accreditation experiences. Through a multiple-case approach, the study also identified the similarities and differences of each case.

Around the world, quality assurance plays a vital role in higher education by supporting institutions in maintaining standards and improvement mechanisms (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023). Hence, by examining how higher education institutions navigate accreditation challenges, this study shall contribute to a deeper understanding of how academic institutions can improve teaching, learning, governance, student support services, and institutional practices.

Moreover, the study holds global significance since the results of the study can be used by institutions to align their quality assurance practices with international quality assurance frameworks such as the ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance, which conducts program and institutional assessments to advance quality assurance in ASEAN higher education. This study is also aligned with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims for inclusive, equitable, and quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all (Zickafoose, 2024). Indeed, accreditation goes beyond compliance; it serves as a mechanism for promoting academic excellence, institutional accountability, global competitiveness, and sustainable educational development.

Furthermore, this study shall benefit several stakeholders. First, the Higher Education Institutions, including Academic Administrators, Quality Assurance Officers, Program Heads, and Institutional Leaders, may benefit from the results to strengthen accreditation preparedness and improve internal systems and documentation practices. Second, the Accrediting Agencies and Accreditation Evaluators may learn the actual

experiences, challenges, and best practices of institutions, which can be used in improving standards, support mechanisms, and evaluation processes. Third, the Commission on Higher Education and other concerned academic authorities may use the results of this study to strengthen their efforts in implementing policies and programs that support institutional development. Fourth, the Faculty members and Academic personnel by gaining clearer understanding of their role and receive guidance in instructional quality, professional development, evidence preparation, and active participation in quality assurance initiatives. Fifth, the students may benefit from improved academic programs, relevant curricula, enhanced student services, and better learning opportunities. Finally, future researchers may conduct further investigations on quality assurance practices, operational challenges, and institutional improvement across various higher education institutions.

2. Method

This section presents the methodological procedures used in the study. It discusses the research participants, materials and instruments, research design, data collection procedure, and data analysis process that guided the exploration of higher education institutions' accreditation experiences.

2.1 Case Units

Participants were drawn from six (6) Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Davao Region that were actively engaged in accreditation processes, selected based on their institutions' experience with national and/or international accreditation and their active engagement in quality assurance practices. These case units represented varied institutional contexts, governance structures, accreditation experiences, and approaches to continuous improvement. Yin (2018) emphasized that multiple-case study research allows the researcher to examine a phenomenon across different real-world contexts, making it suitable for comparing similarities and differences among cases.

2.1.1 Case 1

Case 1 is a public higher education institution in the Davao Region that has demonstrated continued engagement in institutional quality assurance and accreditation, pushing for high-level status across its various academic programs. The university also participates in external accreditation initiatives to evaluate and improve its curriculum, faculty, research, facilities, and student support services.

2.1.2 Case 2

Case 2 is also a public higher education institution in Davao. The institution has established sustained quality assurance mechanisms to sustain institutional standards, improve institutional processes, and ensure the effective delivery of services. Both national and international standards guide this university and implement an internal

evaluation system to monitor its academic program's performance, identify areas for improvement, and continue an evidence-based approach.

2.1.3 Case 3

Case 3 is a private higher education institution located in the Davao Region. Several of its programs have undergone external evaluation and achieved advanced accreditation status, and some of its programs are also undergoing formal assessments. The institution has also received national and international recognition for its academic quality, innovation, institutional performance, and commitment to continuous improvement on institutional system.

2.1.4 Case 4

Case 4 is also a private higher education institution situated in the Davao region and has put a lot of focus on quality assurance since a large number of its programs have received various levels of accreditation. The quality assurance practices undertaken by the institution are indicative of its unwavering commitment to academic excellence, global responsiveness and institutional development.

2.1.5 Case 5

Case 5 is a private higher education institution in the Davao Region that has a well-established quality assurance framework that is supported by national and international certifications. Several of its academic programs have received recognition for their strong performance, program quality, graduate employability, and contribution to institutional excellence.

2.1.6 Case 6

Case 6 is also a private educational institution in the Davao Region. The institution advances quality education through accreditation initiatives, international quality assurance practices, external evaluation and partnerships with a broader university network. The institution's commitment to global competitiveness, to industry, to quality standards, innovation and continuous improvement is seen in its endeavors of accreditation.

Moreover, using the six (6) higher education institutions as a source for this study, the researcher was able to gain a rich understanding of how HEIs navigate accreditation requirements, address institutional challenges, and pursue quality assurance and institutional excellence. Hence, a multiple case study consisting of six (6) cases is appropriate, as it is stated in recent literature that four (4) to ten (10) in-depth cases may provide a suitable range for a multiple case study (Eisenhardt, 1989, as cited by Käss *et al.*, 2024).

The participating institutions were also recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), with some designated as Centers of Excellence (COE) or Centers of Development (COD). A COE demonstrates outstanding performance in teaching,

research, publication, and extension, while a COD shows strong potential to reach this level of excellence. In addition, international recognition was included as a criterion, as it reflects an institution's sustained demonstration of excellence and adherence to globally benchmarked quality standards. Participants from the academic institutions have been identified as having at least three (3) years of accreditation experience with recognized accrediting agencies. Also, one key institutional representative from each institution was purposively selected based on their significant role in the accreditation process and development and has undergone relevant training in quality assurance.

Furthermore, participants were chosen using a purposive sampling method. According to Evans (2024), purposive sampling refers to a sampling method wherein the researcher selects the participants from a given population of interest for their characteristics and experiences, among other factors. The sample selected was used as study subjects to represent a group or population that is the target of the investigation (Stratton, 2024). Those not involved in accreditation, outside the selected institutions or region, or unwilling to participate in the study were excluded.

In this multiple case study, ethical concerns were strictly observed in all cases to ensure the safety and well-being of each participant. All participants were required to give voluntary and informed consent regarding the goals and scope of the study, the nature of their involvement, how the information would be used, and any possible risks associated with their participation. Written informed consent was obtained, and participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Moreover, to ensure anonymity and secrecy and to avoid possible harm, the information gathered was kept and treated with utmost confidentiality, and the names or identities of the research participants were not disclosed, in compliance with RA 10173, or the Data Privacy Act. Before data collection, approval was secured from the University's Institutional Review Board (UMERC). Participants' names and institutional identifiers were concealed to maintain confidentiality. Ethical research practices were upheld by avoiding plagiarism, falsification, or manipulation of responses. Lastly, the final manuscript was submitted to UMERB for ethical clearance and subjected to Turnitin to maintain academic integrity.

2.2 Materials and Instruments

In this study, multiple data sources were used to provide a clear and complete understanding of each case. The study interviewed the six (6) participants to understand their experiences, motivations, challenges, coping mechanisms, insights, and views on how accreditation influenced institutional performance, reputation, and sustainability.

Furthermore, a validated semi-structured interview questionnaire was used as the main research instrument. The guide was prepared in accordance with the study's objectives and major research questions. It included key and follow-up questions that helped the researcher gather deeper insights into the accreditation experiences of the six (6) HEIs. Semi-structured interview is more effective than other forms of interviews for

qualitative research because it allows researcher to obtain in-depth information and evidence from interviewees (Ruslin, 2022).

Accordingly, the semi-structured interview guide was validated by a panel of academe experts to assess its reliability, validity, and alignment with the study's objectives. The validators gave ratings ranging from 9 (Good) to 10 (Very Good), with an overall mean rating of 9.17, indicating a very high level of acceptability and that the instrument was valid and acceptable for use.

2.3 Design and Procedure

This study adopted a qualitative research design in order to investigate the experiences of the selected HEIs in the accreditation process. The qualitative research design is designed to give attention to the contexts, experiences, perspectives, meanings, and subjectivities and is thus suitable for investigating social and institutional phenomena that are complex (Lim, 2024). In particular, a multiple case study design was adopted in order to investigate and compare the varied experiences of the HEIs in relation to the accreditation process.

By examining several HEIs, the researcher was able to capture the individual context of each institution while also identifying general patterns across cases. As per Halkias *et al.* (2022), a multiple-case study is a research design that can be used to establish the relationships among personal, social, behavioral, psychological, organizational, cultural, and environmental aspects that influence organizational and leadership development. Hence, the choice of this research design in studying the processes and challenges facing quality assurance in public and private HEIs was appropriate. Similarly, a multiple-case study helps compare HEIs to identify similarities and differences, thereby enhancing knowledge of accreditation across different institutional settings. According to Creswell and Poth (2024), case study research involves the examination of the bounded case in its natural setting.

The researcher was the primary instrument used in the research. As the main instrument, the researcher secured permission from the participating academic institutions, arranged the schedule most convenient for the participant, and conducted the interview. It is crucial that the researcher establishes rapport and asks appropriate follow-up questions. Also, the researcher was tasked with managing the data, transcribing responses, and analyzing the findings. In addition, the researcher made sure that the questions remained consistent while still allowing participants to express their experiences and perspectives. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher remained neutral, respected the participants' responses, and carefully documented the data throughout the research process.

For the procedure, the researcher first secured approval from the university's research committee and obtained consent from the participating higher education institutions. After approval and consent were granted, the researcher coordinated with the selected participants and explained the purpose of the study, the nature of the participants' participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Also, informed

consent was obtained before the interview to comply with ethical considerations and data privacy guidelines. With the participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated into English where necessary.

The qualitative content analysis began by transcribing the interview data verbatim to identify themes and patterns related to the research questions. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns shared across participants while preserving case-specific variations (Brody & Short, 2026). As highlighted by Broderick *et al.* (2024), it is through thematic analysis that researchers can interpret the qualitative data in a systematic way, while retaining its contextual richness in the case study. Iterative reviews of the transcripts helped in developing, organizing, and interpreting categories.

Moreover, a within-case examination was first conducted to analyze each HEI independently and preserve its unique context and accreditation experience. After completing the analysis of each institution, the researcher conducted a cross-case analysis to determine the similarities and differences among the six (6) cases. Pedersen and Blok (2024) explained that cross-case comparison enables researchers to develop well-supported interpretations by examining both similarities and unexpected differences among cases. In this study, cross-case analysis was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to identify common patterns, differences, and unique experiences among public and private HEIs involved in accreditation.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher followed the four criteria of qualitative rigor, which are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. According to Ahmed (2024), these criteria strengthen the quality and reliability of the research findings. Also, credibility was supported using careful transcription, repeated review of the data, and comparison of the participant's responses. Also, the concept of dependability in this study was achieved by adhering to a clear and systematic research methodology. As regards confirmability, this was achieved by documenting the processes involved in data gathering and analysis to ensure that the findings gathered from the study were based on the answers of the respondents. Finally, as far as transferability is concerned, this was ensured through giving adequate descriptions of the participants, institutions, and accreditation experience.

For ethical considerations, voluntary participation was emphasized, and informed consent was obtained from all selected participants before the interview process. According to Xu *et al.* (2020), the importance of informed consent in research can be attributed to the fact that it is one of the central elements for research, as it enables participants to understand its objectives, process, and voluntary nature. Furthermore, participants were informed of their right to decline or withdraw at any time from the study without consequences. The researcher also upheld confidentiality by making sure that the participants' identities and participating institutions were kept confidential and that the data were used only for research purposes. Before data collection, this research was approved by the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC), ensuring that the study complied with ethical standards for research involving human participants.

3. Results and Discussion

The results, detailed discussion, and interpretation of the findings of the research are covered in this section. More precisely, this section discusses how HEIs cope with accreditation, their difficulties, coping strategies, and lessons and practices that make the process effective and sustainable. First, the researcher introduces the profiles of each case, followed by the emerging themes. Then, the experience of each case related to the accreditation process is discussed, including the difficulties encountered, coping strategies, and lessons learned.

3.1 Within Case Analysis

The purpose of this within-case analysis is to present the experiences, challenges, and insights of the cases in relation to the phenomenon under investigation. It provides an in-depth account of the participant's unique perspective by describing the themes that emerged from the interview, thereby establishing the cross-case analysis.

Case 1: Miss A

a. Experiences

For Case 1, accreditation was seen not only as an obligation but also as an opportunity for the institution to improve. This was done to ensure that the institution's educational programs complied with the regulations, thereby enhancing graduates' employability. As explained in Case 1, accreditation was used as a tool to secure support, funding, and facilities essential to enhancing the quality of educational programs and student learning. The other aspect mentioned in Case 1 is rigor and holism in the process. Its implementation was supported by a structured quality assurance system in which the QA office served as the central coordinating unit, working closely with program heads, the dean, senior administrators, and other institutional offices.

b. Challenges

Meeting accreditation requirements is challenging for HEIs, as academic programs and institutional practices are aligned with quality assurance standards. In Case 1, it faced challenges in aligning faculty qualifications, research outputs, and extension programs with accreditation standards, along with a limited budget, heavy workload, lack of incentives, emotional stress, and resistance. To cope, the institution prioritized resources, assigned tasks based on personnel competencies, strengthened training, revised policies based on accreditation feedback, and gradually digitized documents to facilitate easier evidence storage and retrieval.

c. Insights

Regarding the insights gained from this case, the first thing that stands out about Case 1 is that an accreditation process that succeeds involves more than simply fulfilling external demands. It involves ensuring that the institution's policies and systems align

with the quality standards and that the accreditation process becomes part of the university's culture. This case reveals that good leadership, proper quality assurance structure, effective communication, planning, faculty involvement, accountability, and monitoring are all important aspects for accreditation success.

Case 2: Miss B

a. Experiences

For Case 2, accreditation began with a directive from management. Further, it was enhanced through the creation of a culture of quality based on ISO standards, internal quality assurance systems, and a centralized QA office. The institution has moved from an informal, compliance-based approach to an evidence- and documentation-based one, driven by ISO and an internal quality assurance system patterned after international frameworks. This has been made possible through continuous monitoring via coaching, management review, audit, calibration, and corrective action.

b. Challenges

As mentioned in Case 2, the challenges their institution encountered included resistance to change, budget constraints, excessive paperwork, workload issues, and adaptation to the structured quality assurance system. Although at first the teachers and staff showed some reluctance, once they realized the need for coaching and monitoring, participation increased. To solve these challenges, they used budget planning, benchmarking, peer review, workload credits, role differentiation, and decision-making.

c. Insights

Quality Standards were maintained through consistent communication, policy-making, participatory governance, collaboration, and recognition of personnel. Regular coaching, calibration, consultation, and monitoring flagged any discrepancies. On the other hand, documentation tracked the process through policies. In general, the accreditation process is an investment that results in better planning, facilities, governance, efficiency, global orientation, and personnel commitment.

Case 3: Miss C

a. Experiences

Case 3 sees accreditation as very much part and parcel of their quality approach. The accreditation process has assisted the institution in enhancing its QA processes, documentation, accountability, academic support services, institutional reputation, graduate employability, enrollment, and recognition.

b. Challenges

The accreditation process for Case 3 also encountered difficulties, including poor documentation skills, fragmented data storage, insufficient time to prepare, conflicting priorities, differing requirements from the accreditors, and exhaustion among faculty and

staff due to the work. To overcome these challenges, the institution implemented centralized data storage, improved documentation, incorporated accreditation into planning, and adopted a realistic approach to compliance. To cope with these issues, Case 3 stated that their institution began working on centralized data storage, documentation improvement, integrating accreditation into planning, and adopting a realistic approach to compliance.

c. Insights

Case 3 mentioned that accreditation should be seen as an investment in governance, systems, performance, reputation, and international competitiveness. It was emphasized that there needs to be a shift from an activity-oriented to a results-oriented approach to quality assurance, focusing on students' performance, institutions' effectiveness, stakeholders' satisfaction, and adherence to international standards. Conclusively, Case 3 focuses on long-term quality assurance, which is based on shared responsibility and commitment to continuous improvement.

Case 4: Miss D

a. Experiences

In Case 4, accreditation was seen as the process of continually implementing the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle to ensure improvement in institutional systems. The institution is also a stakeholder-centered organization that relies on feedback from students, their parents, industry players, and other stakeholders to improve service delivery and decision-making. While accreditation initially elicited resistance due to the extra work involved, effective communication, teamwork, administrative support, and dedication changed that.

b. Challenges

Case 4 mentioned difficulties with inadequate staffing, competing interests, and limited time to carry out QA activities. At first, QA functions would be conducted by only one individual across several campuses and levels, in addition to teaching and other activities. To address these issues, the organization relied on coordination among deans, unit managers, process owners, and other top management personnel. Moreover, trust, team spirit, administrative assistance, meetings, and minimized resistance.

c. Insights

Orientation, capacity development, monitoring, relationship-oriented leadership, innovation, and data utilization were highlighted in Case 4 as key elements for maintaining quality standards. The application of the PDCA cycle enabled the planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement process through audits, follow-ups, and strategic review. Quality assurance leaders helped establish trust and collaboration. In addition, the need for accreditation encouraged innovation in climate-smart learning,

asynchronous learning via LMS, micro-credentials, laboratory improvements, and international mobility.

Case 5: Mr. E

a. Experiences

In Case 5, accreditation was viewed as an important strategy for strengthening institutional quality and direction of the institution. The accreditation involved conducting gap analysis, setting up committees, providing evidence of important documents, constant monitoring, and support from management. Generally, accreditation brought about accountability, responsiveness, and continuous improvement in the institution.

b. Challenges

Case 5 had similar problems, including resistance to change, increased workload, resource constraints, and difficulties recruiting qualified staff. To address the above problems, the organization ensured accreditation through its strategies and activities, held information and training sessions, reduced the workload of some staff members, focused on accreditable programs, and multitasked as required.

c. Insights

Case 5 emphasized the importance of integrating accreditation into institutional planning, evidence-based decision-making, committed leadership, and continuous learning development. Case 5 also leveraged its accreditation process through its quality assurance office, criterion-based committees, gap analysis, benchmarking, SWOT analysis, accreditation results, and performance data in governance, policy-making and service improvement.

Case 6: Miss F

a. Experiences

The accreditation journey of Case 6 shows how quality assurance became part of the institution's long-term strategy for academic excellence, global relevance, and continuous improvement. While most institutions tend to emphasize the process aspect of Quality Assurance, in Case 6, QA was embedded in the institution's daily operations through systems alignment, internal review, monitoring, reporting, feedback, and leadership support.

b. Challenges

The challenges for Case 6 include workload, lack of time and resources, documentation, and adapting to new QA systems. In response to these challenges, the institution defined roles and responsibilities, assigned accountability, promoted effective communication, coordinated activities across departments, and introduced changes in phases. Working together made it easier to overcome resistance and engage everyone in the process.

c. Insights

Case 6 emphasized that successful accreditation requires quality assurance to be embedded in institutional culture, planning, and daily decision-making. It was seen as an ongoing activity that depended on documentation, monitoring, assessment, and improvement. Accreditation became a systemic effort because of the joint efforts of faculty members, administrators, support staff, and the QA office.

4. Themes on Motivation to Pursue Quality Assurance in Higher Education

To understand why higher education institutions pursue quality assurance, it is essential to examine the experiences of those directly involved in the accreditation process. This section draws on the accounts of six (6) participants who shared their institutional experiences, motivations, and perspectives regarding accreditation. The analysis revealed five major themes: *Commitment to Quality Enhancement and Continuous Improvement*, *Compliance with Regulatory and Accreditation Standards*, *Pursuit of Global Competitiveness and Recognition*, *Development of a Quality Assurance Culture*, and *Stakeholder Responsiveness and Strategic Institutional Development*. These themes have provided a clear indication of the many and diverse, yet interrelated, motives of institutions seeking accreditation.

Table 1 below summarizes the major themes and corresponding ideas identified across cases. A detailed discussion of each theme follows to explain how these motivations were expressed within the institutions' perspective.

Table 1: Themes on Motivation to Pursue Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Theme	Core Idea	Illustrative Quote
Commitment to Quality Enhancement and Continuous Improvement	Accreditation drives systematic institutional improvement.	"The primary objective... is basically to improve its systems... accreditation promotes continuous improvement because it compels the school to establish a permanent PDCA cycle." (C4)
	Accreditation institutionalizes quality processes.	"It is fundamentally about strengthening processes, clarifying accountability, and cultivating a culture of continuous improvement." (C6)
	External evaluation prevents complacency.	"Without accreditation... there is a tendency for us to think what we are doing is already fine." (C4)
Compliance with Regulatory and Accreditation Standards	Accreditation fulfills national regulatory requirements.	"We want our undergraduate programs to be compliant in the national standards mandated by AACUP and our COPC certificate." (C1)
	Institutional leaders initiate accreditation.	"It was really mandated by our President... we should start opening ourselves to assessment and accreditation." (C2)
	Accreditation ensures graduates' eligibility.	"That is a requirement before students can take licensure exams." (C2)
Pursuit of Global Competitiveness and Recognition	Programs are benchmarked against global standards.	"Align the institution's standards and practices with national and international standards." (C4)

	Accreditation enhances graduates' career opportunities.	"Our students will be prioritized in terms of hiring in the international arena." (C1)
	Accreditation validates institutional excellence.	"We can confidently show others that what we claim about excellence is true." (C2)
Development of a Quality Assurance Culture	Accreditation becomes embedded in daily practice.	"Quality assurance must be embedded in everyday operations, not activated only during evaluation periods." (C6)
	Multiple QA mechanisms reinforce excellence.	"Aside from external audits, we also have our own internal audits." (C4)
	Accreditation is viewed as an ongoing institutional journey.	"Social Work is already Level 4. That has taken decades." (C3)
Stakeholder Responsiveness and Strategic Institutional Development	Accreditation encourages responsiveness to stakeholders.	"We listen to our stakeholders... customer satisfaction feedback helps improve our services." (C4)
	Accreditation supports organizational reform.	"It prompted the management to revisit its strategic plan and quality assurance measures." (C5)
	Accreditation fosters institutional competitiveness.	"Other degree programs also feel they do not want to be left behind." (C2)

a. Commitment to Quality Enhancement and Continuous Improvement

This theme captures the organization's commitment to using the process to achieve systematic improvement and continuous quality enhancement. In processes such as the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA), the concept of quality is institutionalized rather than used temporarily solely for external evaluation. This is evident in Case 4, which emphasized the use of the PDCA process in the accreditation process.

"Basically, para maimprove gyud ang system mao jud siya ang pinaka rason maimprove ang system especially nga with ISO kuan siya eh naka PDCA so following the cycle sa PDCA more or less maimprove gyud ang system."

Basically, the main reason is to improve the system. Since it follows the ISO framework, which is based on the PDCA cycle, following that cycle will, more or less, continuously improve the system. (C4)

Similarly, Case 6 also emphasized that continuous improvement is achieved by regularly reviewing and improving institutional practices through quality assurance.

"As we progressed, we recognized that it is fundamentally about strengthening processes, clarifying accountability, and cultivating a culture of continuous improvement. Accreditation reshaped how we view institutional performance. It encouraged us to look

beyond outcomes and focus on the sustainability and integrity of the systems that produce those outcomes.” (C6)

Indeed, an external assessment will go a long way toward preventing institutional complacency by offering an objective evaluation of prevailing systems and questioning whether what institutions have in place is enough. Thus, Cases 4 and 6 strongly emphasized this commitment to systematic improvement in their accounts of accreditation and quality assurance.

b. Compliance with Regulatory and Accreditation Standards

In this theme, the importance of accreditation as an effective means of meeting the requirements set by national regulatory standards is emphasized. Furthermore, Case 2 highlighted the important role of institutional leaders in initiating accreditation, as it is a key mechanism for ensuring program quality and professional licensure eligibility.

“It was really mandated by our President... there really was a memorandum that was trickled down to all the campuses that we should start opening ourselves sa assessment, accreditation, international standards...And probably din siguro because naa nami courses na need na og mga licensures our graduates cannot push through with more opportunities because wala sila’y licensure, something similar to that one.”

It was really mandated by our President... there really was a memorandum that was trickled down to all the campuses that we should start opening ourselves to assessment, accreditation, international standards...And probably also because we already have courses that need licensures, our graduates cannot push through with more opportunities because they do not have the required licensure or similar to that one. (C2)

c. Pursuit of Global Competitiveness and Recognition

In this theme, the role of accreditation is revealed through its potential to increase an institution's competitiveness and recognition. The process of comparing programs and institutions to national and international standards enables the assessment of educational institutions' performance against global standards. Case 1 highlighted that accredited programs enhance graduates' competitiveness and increase their chances of being prioritized for employment at the international level.

“Our students will be given enough chance to be promoted, and at the same time they will be prioritized in terms of hiring in the international arena, so that’s the reason why we pursued accreditation not only in national but in the international level.” (C1)

The responses of participants demonstrated that the quest for accreditation is not about meeting certain criteria but is also driven by the desire of institutions to

achieve international recognition, credibility, and provide better opportunities for students.

d. Development of a Quality Assurance Culture

This theme stems from the understanding of the participants that the process is most effective when the institution fosters a culture of quality assurance rather than treating it as a compliance activity. This was evident in the response of Case 6, which highlighted the importance of integrating quality assurance into institutions' day-to-day operations.

"A defining moment in our accreditation journey was the realization that quality assurance must be embedded in everyday operations, not activated only during evaluation periods." (C6)

Based on participants' responses, the research findings show that participants view quality assurance as an ongoing institutional culture rather than a one-time accreditation requirement.

e. Stakeholder Responsiveness and Strategic Institutional Development

This theme highlights participants' view that accreditation makes an institution more responsive and strategically improves the organization. This view is evident in Case 4, where the participant emphasizes the importance of stakeholder feedback for improving services and decision-making.

"We listen sa stakeholders then dalaon ang mga dalaon nato ang mga information sa sulod sa organization and then we do something about those information yeah either halimbawa customer satisfaction sa atong client so makatabang siya para mainprove ang atong mga services."

We listen to our stakeholders, bring the information they provide into the organization, and then take action based on that information. For example, customer satisfaction feedback from our clients can help us improve our services. (C4)

In addition, participants were aware that the accreditation process drives change in organizations, as it forces them to assess their strategic direction. This perception is illustrated in Case 5, in which the participant noted that accreditation prompted the organization to rethink its strategic plans and quality assurance processes.

"It also made the school revisit its strategic plan and directions, most especially the quality assurance measures for both academic programs and academic support services." (C5)

In summary, the experiences shared by participants in pursuing quality assurance indicate that it enhances institutional development through strategic responsiveness, encourages strategic development, and builds an environment of continual institutional development. Overall, these quality assurance processes allowed the institutions to become adaptable, competitive, and responsive to change in the higher education environment.

5. Themes on Challenges and Coping Strategies for Navigating Requirements for Institutional Excellence

This section presents the themes that emerged from the challenges and coping mechanisms of higher education institutions as they navigate the requirements for institutional excellence. In this part, it is revealed that participants encountered challenges in the accreditation process due to various factors, including workload pressure, resource scarcity, documentation, resistance, and compliance. It also highlights the different strategies HEIs employ to address challenges, including leadership support, collaboration, capacity building, resource management, and systematic quality assurance practices.

Table 2 below presents the themes of the challenges and coping strategies used by HEIs to navigate the requirements for institutional excellence. The findings highlight the following themes: *Strategic Leadership and Governance*, *Collaborative Organizational Engagement*, *Systematic Documentation and Process Management*, *Resource Optimization and Capacity Building*, and *Continuous Improvement and Quality Culture*. These themes demonstrate that dealing with accreditation challenges is not only an issue of leadership and resource availability but also of involvement and system management.

Table 2: Themes on Challenges and Coping Strategies
for Navigating Requirements for Institutional Excellence

Theme	Core Idea	Illustrative Quote
Strategic Leadership and Governance	Leadership drives quality initiatives.	"It was really mandated by our President... we should start opening ourselves to assessment, accreditation, and international standards." (C2)
	Authority facilitates implementation.	"The process became easier when I became the Vice President for Academics because I was able to streamline the process." (C4)
	Continuous oversight ensures compliance.	"I strengthened the monitoring process with the help of the deans and unit heads." (C4)
Collaborative Organizational Engagement	Shared responsibility promotes quality.	"We addressed these challenges by strengthening coordination mechanisms, clarifying responsibilities, and promoting open communication across units." (C6)
	Qualified personnel support excellence.	"We have to ensure that our faculty... must have the skills in order for them to be qualified in the accreditation." (C1)

	Acceptance facilitates implementation.	"Innovations and changes... made academic and support staff uncomfortable only at the outset." (C5)
Systematic Documentation and Process Management	Organized records improve preparedness.	"We would like to work on a data management system to make sure that by the time we have accreditation, we have the data that we need." (C3)
	Standardized evidence supports compliance.	"The evidence is not properly organized... we are looking for data." (C3)
	Accreditation becomes routine practice.	"Accreditation activities became part of routine operations rather than additional tasks." (C6)
	Investment supports quality standards.	"The school should really allocate a substantial amount to comply with the minimum requirements." (C5)
Resource Optimization and Capacity Building	Adequate manpower improves implementation.	"The major difficulty was really the lack of manpower." (C4)
	Balanced responsibilities sustain quality efforts.	"Integrating accreditation tasks into existing responsibilities can initially create pressure." (C6)
	Alignment ensures accreditation readiness.	"We need to have researches that are program specific because this is the mandatory requirement." (C1)
Continuous Improvement and Quality Culture	Ongoing enhancement strengthens quality.	"The recommendation was implemented... we are still looking for data." (C3)
	Accreditation becomes institutional culture.	"A culture has developed where we say, 'Okay, let's go for assessment,' especially after seeing the positive benefits." (C2)
	Flexibility sustains organizational change.	"Over time, accreditation processes became institutionalized..." (C6)

a. Strategic Leadership and Governance

This theme highlights how institutions manage accreditation by providing clear direction, authority, and continuous monitoring. This is achieved through leaders initiating quality assurance processes, assigning roles, and enforcing accreditation standards. When there is adequate authority from quality assurance leaders, coordination becomes easier, and the institution's processes are streamlined. Case 4 highlighted the crucial role of Deans and Unit heads in strengthening monitoring and ensuring that offices remained compliant with quality standards.

"I-strengthen lang ang coordination, ang involvement sa mga tao. I-strengthen lang sad ang kanang unsa nang tawag ana, monitoring through the help of the deans and the Heads, Unit heads oh kay ang monitoring nako kay through the Deans na lang man ug mga unit heads."

Strengthened coordination and encouraged the involvement of the people. I also strengthened the monitoring process with the help of the Deans, Department Heads, and Unit Heads. (C4).

Hence, from the response provided by the participant, it is evident that dedicated leadership, adequate power, and supervision are crucial for ensuring the success of accreditation processes.

b. Collaborative Organizational Engagement

This theme highlights the fact that accreditation requires the involvement of faculty, administration, and support staff in an institution. With proper allocation of responsibilities, coordination, and effective communication among all members of the institution, everyone will be able to focus on institutional quality goals. Also, collaboration with competent individuals and the adoption of new methods will help reduce resistance. This was clearly evident from Case 6.

"We addressed these challenges by strengthening coordination mechanisms, clarifying responsibilities, and promoting open communication across units." (C6)

Based on participants' responses, accreditation becomes more manageable when responsibilities or workload are divided among members and personnel are properly qualified. Also, it is important that stakeholders are given enough support to understand and accept institutional changes.

c. Systematic Documentation and Process Management

This theme explains how HEIs organize, store, and retrieve necessary documents needed for accreditation. It is crucial for institutions to have reliable data systems and standardized documentation processes to reduce delays during evaluation periods. If these processes become integrated into the day-to-day operations of institutions, preparation for accreditation becomes more efficient and less burdensome. Case 3 shared the need for an organized data management system so that necessary evidences are easily retrieved and readily available before accreditation.

"Data management system ah to make sure that by the time we have the accreditation we have the data that we need. So kailangan ano ah naayos pa ngayon ka-dedeliver lang yung storage that we want. Once it's installed it will ensure we're housing and storage ng mga units they can submit to us whatever report they have, reports ah mga evidences, mga accomplishments pwede nila isubmit to us for storage."

Data management system, to make sure that by the time we have the accreditation, we have the data that we need. So, it still needs to be organized. Right now, the storage that we want has just been delivered. Once it's installed, it will ensure we are housing and storage of the units; they can submit to us whatever report they have, evidence, their accomplishments; they will submit them to us for storage. (C3)

Also, Case 6 explained that accreditation work eventually became part of routine institutional operations after processes were properly organized and established.

“Over time, as processes became institutionalized, accreditation activities became part of routine operations rather than additional tasks.” (C6)

Indeed, documentation processes enhance preparedness, ensure compliance, and help transform accreditation from a periodic task into a regular organizational practice.

d. Resource Optimization and Capacity Building

This theme involves the careful management of funding, personnel, time, and institutional responsibilities. Accreditation requires a substantial amount of money, technological tools, training, and personnel. Thus, organizations have to focus on their essential needs, develop the potential of their personnel, and properly combine the work on accreditation with the normal activities. The importance of allocating sufficient financial resources was emphasized by Case 5, who noted that institutions must invest substantially to meet minimum accreditation requirements.

“Accreditation requirements extremely demand cost. This means that the school should really allocate a substantial amount to comply with the minimum requirements e.g., facilities, laboratories, technology tools.” (C5)

Similarly, Case 6 explained that adding accreditation responsibilities to existing duties can initially create workload pressure among personnel.

“Integrating accreditation tasks into existing responsibilities can initially create pressure.” (C6)

Hence, sustainable accreditation requires adequate resources, trained personnel, and reasonable workload arrangements to ensure that quality assurance responsibilities are completed effectively.

e. Continuous Improvement and Quality Culture

This theme refers to the gradual integration of accreditation standards into the regular practices of the institution. Research programs and other academic endeavors can ensure that the institution is ready for the process of accreditation, while actions in response to recommendations improve the performance of the institution. Over time, accreditation becomes part of the organizational culture rather than an activity conducted only before external evaluations.

The importance of aligning academic outputs with accreditation requirements was highlighted by Case 1, particularly in ensuring that research activities were program-specific.

"And then also researches because most of our faculty researches are also not align in their field like most of the researches are on educational management but we need to have researches that are program specific, yes because this is the mandatory requirement." (C1)

Likewise, Case 6 emphasized that accreditation processes gradually became institutionalized and integrated into regular operations.

"Over time, as processes became institutionalized, accreditation activities became part of routine operations rather than additional tasks." (C6)

The responses of the participants suggest that to attain continuous institutional improvement, it requires more than just addressing individual accreditation requirements. It should be part of the institution's daily operations in such a way that it will ensure the alignment of established standards and foster a culture that supports continuous learning, adaptation, and long-term quality enhancement.

6. Themes on Insights in Navigating National and International Excellence Standards in Higher Education

This section presents the insights from the selected HEIs of the study on navigating national and international excellence standards. It also highlights how accreditation contributed to institutional planning, quality culture, governance, documentation, and continual improvement. Insights from the participants indicate that accreditation is not just about compliance, but it is also a strategic process for accountability and sustained institutional excellence.

Table 3 below highlights the insights provided by the participants in their effort to achieve national and international standards. Four themes emerged from the findings; they include: *Drives the Quality of Strategic Planning, Enhances the Culture for Institutional Quality, Improves Governance, Policy and Documentation Processes, and Transforms Approach to Pursuing Institutional Excellence.*

Table 3: Themes on Insights in Navigating National and International Excellence Standards in Higher Education

Theme	Core Idea	Illustrative Quote
Drives the Quality of Strategic Planning	Excellence begins with aligning institutional plans with accreditation standards.	<i>"It is alignment of the mandatory requirements... When everything is in the system, you don't need to document just for accreditation." (C1)</i>
	Accreditation should be embedded in institutional operations.	<i>"Embedding quality assurance into institutional planning... accreditation becomes a natural outcome." (C6)</i>

	Institutional performance indicators drive quality improvement.	<i>"Fully integrate the school's strategic and annual plan to ensure relevant performance indicators are accomplished." (C5)</i>
Enhanced the Culture for Institutional Quality	Regular dialogue sustains quality improvement.	<i>"The main strategy is really continuous communication." (C2)</i>
	Everyone shares responsibility for quality assurance.	<i>"When all stakeholders understand their role... accreditation becomes a natural outcome." (C6)</i>
	Excellence requires inclusive decision-making.	<i>"We do not want it to be entirely top-down. We want everyone to be involved." (C3)</i>
	Quality becomes part of organizational culture.	<i>"It's embedded in your culture." (C1)</i>
Improved Governance, Policy and Documentation Processes	Documentation improved monitoring and evaluation	<i>"The institution's documentation improved significantly... implementation, monitoring, and evaluation also improved." (C4)</i>
	Documentation preserves institutional knowledge.	<i>"Documentation is very important." (C2)</i>
	Dedicated offices strengthen accreditation management.	<i>"Dedicate an office that will solely focus on accreditation." (C5)</i>
Transformed Approach to Pursuing Institutional Excellence	Quality focuses on measurable outcomes and impact.	<i>"We begin to focus on outcomes and impacts rather than merely conducting activities." (C3)</i>
	Institutional leaders champion excellence initiatives.	<i>"Administrators provide policy direction and resource support." (C6)</i>
	Institutional process improved by PDCA framework	<i>"Accreditation and quality assurance systems ... were very helpful, especially when the PDCA cycle was consistently followed...." (C4)</i>

a. Drives the Quality of Strategic Planning

This theme demonstrates the necessity of institutional planning in accreditation especially through integrating strategic objectives of the institution, yearly plans, policies and activities with the standards at the national and international levels. This enables accreditation activities to become part of institutional planning and ensures that improvement targets are clearly identified, monitored, and accomplished, rather than preparing documents only during accreditation periods.

Case 6 also had a similar perspective, highlighting that embedding quality assurance in institutional planning allows accreditation to become a natural result of consistent quality practices.

“Embedding quality assurance into institutional planning. Rather than preparing only during accreditation cycles, we sustain a culture of documentation, monitoring, and evaluation throughout the year.” (C6)

In addition, Case 5 emphasized the need to fully integrate accreditation into strategic and annual plans so that relevant indicators and targets can be monitored and achieved.

“Fully integrate the school’s strategic and annual plan to ensure that relevant performance indicators and targets are set to be accomplished.” (C5)

Hence, the responses of the participants show that accreditation improves the quality of strategic planning by linking institutional direction, performance expectations, and quality assurance requirements within one coordinated system.

b. Enhanced the Culture for Institutional Quality

This theme refers to the shared mindset of the institution towards accreditation wherein it becomes part of its values, behavior, and responsibilities. A strong quality culture is developed through continuous communication, stakeholder participation, clear understanding of roles, and ownership of quality assurance processes. The value of continuous communication in sustaining institutional quality was highlighted by Case 2, which identified regular engagement as a central strategy in maintaining awareness and participation.

“Ang strategies gyud noh kay magsige lang gyud kag communicate sa ilaha kanang makadungog gyud ka sa ilahang problem sa ilahang opisina.”

The main strategy is really continuous communication. You really need to keep communicating with them so you can hear the actual problems in their offices (C2)

Similarly, Case 1 shared that quality assurance is something that should be embedded within the institution’s culture and routine practices.

It’s embedded in your culture, the culture of the university that we do this and this will be for the program, but this is our vision for the institution. (C1)

Taken together, the responses of the participants indicate that an institutional culture of quality is strengthened when communication is continuous, responsibilities are shared, and stakeholders are actively involved in quality improvement efforts.

c. Improved Governance, Policy and Documentation Processes

This theme focuses on how the process of accreditation improves the institutional structure through better coordination of leadership, policy-making, accountability, documentation, monitoring and evaluation processes. It enables institutions to put into place policies, allocate responsibilities, document information and put in place a system of managing quality assurance processes. This point was brought out by Case 4.

“Dako kaayo siya ug contribution ah na improve ang mga processes Ma’am documentation naimprove siya. Ang kuan ang manner of implementation, ang monitoring, ang evaluations. Nag improve gyud siya Ma’am tungod sa quality assurance Ma’am.”

It contributed greatly, Ma’am. The institution’s processes and documentation improved significantly. The manner of implementation, monitoring, and evaluation also improved. Quality assurance had a major impact on these improvements. (C4)

Meanwhile, Case 5 highlighted the importance of assigning a dedicated office to focus on accreditation and quality assurance responsibilities.

“Dedicate an office that will solely focus on the accreditation of academic programs and the school in general.” (C5)

From the responses given by the participants, it shows that achievement of effective accreditation requires the presence of a good governance framework, formal policies, systematic documentation, and clear structures for institutional accountability and sustained compliance.

d. Transformed Approach to Pursuing Institutional Excellence

This theme reflects the transition from activity-based and compliance-focused practices into a more outcomes-driven, evidence-based, and continuously improving approach. This transformation requires strong administrative leadership, adequate policy and resource support, and consistent application of improvement frameworks. Such as the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. This was explained by Case 4 on the effectiveness of the PDCA cycle in accreditation.

“Dako gyud siyag naimprove labi na gyud kung i-follow nimu ang PDCA. Dako na siyag improvement. It improved. It was a very big help, Ma’am.”

It was a big improvement, especially when the PDCA cycle was consistently followed. There was a big improvement. It improved. It was a very big help, Ma’am. (C4)

Additionally, Case 6 emphasized the significant role of administrators in providing guidance on various institutional policies and the utilization of resources, indicating that leadership is important in translating quality goals into institutional action.

“Faculty members contribute through curriculum alignment and assessment integrity. Administrators provide policy direction and resource support. Support staff ensure operational consistency.” (C6)

Overall, the responses of the participants in all the cases indicate that accreditation changes the quest for excellence through result-oriented thinking, good leadership, evaluation, and perfection of the system.

7. With-in Cross Analysis

The purpose of the cross-case analysis is to examine the commonalities and variations in the experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and insights across all cases. By comparing the findings across all cases, this section will highlight themes and unique perspectives that will help provide a better, holistic view of the phenomenon being studied.

Table 4 presents the results of the cross-case analysis of the similarities and differences among six (6) cases in relation to the themes from their experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and learnings of accreditation and quality assurance.

Table 4: Synthesis of Cross Analysis

	Emerging Theme	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	Cross-Case Interpretation
Motivation to Pursue Quality Assurance in Higher Education	Commitment to Quality Enhancement and Continuous Improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All six cases viewed accreditation as a way to improve systems, programs, services, and outcomes, with each institution focusing on areas relevant to its needs.
	Compliance with Regulatory and Accreditation Standards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All cases recognized the need to meet national and international quality standards, although they followed different requirements set by various accrediting agencies.
	Pursuit of Global Competitiveness and Recognition	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All cases linked accreditation with stronger reputation, competitiveness, employability, student recruitment, rankings, and institutional credibility.

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	Development of a Quality Assurance Culture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All institutions viewed accreditation as a shared and ongoing responsibility, supported by quality assurance systems, internal audits, and regular quality practices.
	Stakeholder Responsiveness and Strategic Institutional Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All cases showed that accreditation helped institutions address stakeholder needs and support planning, resources, program priorities, facilities, employability, and operations.
Challenges and Coping Strategies for Navigating Requirements for Institutional Excellence	Strategic Leadership and Governance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Across all cases, leadership support, clear authority, policies, and monitoring helped manage resistance, coordinate accreditation work, and include quality assurance in institutional plans.
	Collaborative Organizational Engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All six cases relied on shared responsibility, coordination, communication, coaching, and committee-based collaboration, though their specific approaches varied.
	Systematic Documentation and Process Management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All cases managed accreditation through coordinated procedures, monitoring, documentation, and integration into regular operations.
	Resource Optimization and Capacity Building	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All cases managed time, manpower, and funding limits through prioritization, training, incentives, overtime, voluntary work, or available resources.
	Continuous Improvement and Quality Culture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Across the six cases, accreditation gradually shifted from compliance to a culture of continuous improvement and accountability, although

								institutions differed in their level of readiness and practice.
Insights in Navigating National and International Excellence Standards in HEIs	Drives the Quality of Strategic Planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Across the six cases, accreditation standards and recommendations were connected to institutional plans, policies, resource allocation, or recurring operational schedules.
	Enhanced the Culture for Institutional Quality	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All cases showed that quality assurance depends on shared participation, accountability, consultation, orientation, and supportive relationships among stakeholders.
	Improved Governance, Policy and Documentation Processes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All cases consistently reported stronger documentation, clearer policies, more formal communication, monitoring, audits, and mechanisms for acting on recommendations
	Transformed Approach to Pursuing Institutional Excellence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Across all cases, accreditation transformed the meaning of excellence from passing an external review to sustaining measurable and evidence-based institutional development.

7.1 Motivation to Pursue Quality Assurance in Higher Education

To understand the common patterns across HEIs on pursuing quality assurance, this section presents a cross-case analysis of the six (6) participants who shared their experiences, motivations and perspectives regarding accreditation.

a. Commitment to Quality Enhancement and Continuous Improvement

Across all six (6) cases, accreditation was seen as a tool for improving the systems, programs, services, and outcomes of the institutions. They are similar in terms of a common belief that accreditation helps identify weaknesses and avoid complacency. This suggests that continuous improvement was a motivating factor, although each HEI used it in its own context. Case 6 shared that to improve the institutional system, it requires strengthening processes, clear accountability, and cultivating a culture of continuous improvement.

"Initially, we anticipated that accreditation would focus heavily on documentation. However, as we progressed, we recognized that it is fundamentally about strengthening processes, clarifying accountability, and cultivating a culture of continuous improvement. Accreditation reshaped how we view institutional performance. It encouraged us to look beyond outcomes and focus on the sustainability and integrity of the systems that produce those outcomes." (C6)

b. Compliance with Regulatory and Accreditation Standards

Compliance was common in all six (6) cases since accreditation was viewed as necessary to meet national, professional and international standards. Although specific requirements and standards vary among the cases. According to the statement of Case 1, accreditation was pursued to meet both national and international accreditation requirements.

"We want our undergraduate programs to be compliant in the national standards mandated by our accrediting body." (C1)

c. Pursuit of Global Competitiveness and Recognition

Across cases, accreditation was associated with benchmarking, employability of graduates, institutional credibility, and global positioning through the use of accreditation and international standards. Case 1 emphasized international employability, particularly with their students, while in Case 2, accreditation was seen as a confirmation of institutional excellence. Cases 3 and 4 focused on alignment with international quality assurance frameworks. Similarly, global competitiveness is also shown in Case 5 since accreditation improved their institution's readiness through training of personnel and availability of national and international accreditors for academic programs.

"Also, the university regularly conducts retooling of concerned personnel on the latest developments and updates in relation to national and international accreditation. The school also has a pool of national and international accreditors to further support the academic programs." (C5)

Thus, this reflects that accreditation strengthens not only the institution's recognition but also supports alignment with global standards. By aligning the institution's academic programs, institutional systems and personnel capabilities with quality standards used in accreditation, HEIs would enhance their global competitiveness.

d. Development of a Quality Assurance Culture

Across all cases, accreditation became part of institutional culture, and it also featured the same elements that facilitated shared responsibility, internal auditing,

documentation, monitoring, training, and involvement of academic or administrative departments. Although the participants displayed different degrees of accreditation maturity, all HEIs were moving towards building up a culture of quality assurance. The quality of culture can also be observed in Case 2 wherein they practice the “habit of quality” during accreditation.

“Naa man gud mi gina tawag nga murag amoang slogan namo sa QAO ginatawag namo og habit of quality... para pag once naa kay himuon na process you always think about ay “Ayaw na kay dili na mao ang requirement nato, we have to do this””.

We actually have something that we call, like, our slogan in QAO. We call it the “habit of quality.” So, whenever you are about to do a process, you always think, “Oh, no, don't do that because that's no longer our requirement; we have to do this.” (C2)

e. Stakeholder Responsiveness and Strategic Institutional Development

All cases recognized the need to consider the expectations of students, faculty, staff, parents, industry partners, accrediting bodies, and other stakeholders. Case 1 focused on faculty and student development, Case 2 on mandates of leadership, finance, and program competition within the institution, Case 3 on accreditation and issues of enrolment, employability, and international student attraction, Case 4 took a stakeholder-focused “outside-in” approach, Case 5 used accreditation to review its strategic plans and reputation-related issues, and Case 6 concentrated on alignment of leadership, academic and administrative offices, and QA office.

This proves that accreditation is a governance tool that connects stakeholder expectations with institutional priorities and resource management. This is evident in Case 4, where the following quotation appears, “We listen to our stakeholders... customer satisfaction feedback helps improve our services.”

“So, with accreditation, most likely schools would tend to listen sa students’, parents noh mga industry partners noh kay sila man gyud ang murag atong pinaka client pareho ang estudyante, so this we have to listen from them then more or less maimprove sad nato atoang mga services.”

So, with accreditation, schools are more likely to listen to students, parents, and industry partners because they are among our primary clients and stakeholders, especially the students. We need to listen to them so that we can improve our services. (C4)

Thus, the results obtained regarding the institution's motivation to conduct quality assurance across the above-mentioned cases have been similar, treating accreditation as a means of improving quality, compliance, competitiveness, quality culture, and the

institution's responsiveness to stakeholders. These findings are supported by literature regarding the effects of accreditation on quality assurance, accountability, program quality, reputation, and stakeholder confidence (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023; Cagape & Prado, 2025; Kumar *et al.*, 2021). Also, it suggests that accreditation contributes to student support, institutional credibility, and competitiveness, while non-accreditation can lead to stakeholder doubts and lower enrolment (Albaroudi *et al.*, 2023; Burnett, 2022).

7.2 Challenges and Coping Strategies in Navigating Requirements for Institutional Excellence

To explore how HEIs navigate the demands of institutional excellence, this section discusses the challenges they face and the strategies they use in the accreditation process. The participants shared their experiences, particularly the challenges in relation to meeting quality assurance standards.

a. Strategic Leadership and Governance

Across all cases, leadership was a key factor in managing accreditation challenges by providing direction, authority, resources, monitoring, and institutional support. Although leadership practices were expressed through different structures, such as QA offices, presidential directives, strategic governance, reporting systems, and phased implementation, all cases showed that accreditation becomes more sustainable when leaders actively support and legitimize the process.

This is reflected in the response of Case 3, where the participant stated that accreditation efforts can only move forward when top leadership provides clear support and authority.

"It's important that the leadership and governance supports accreditation kay kung dili man sila musupport dili man pud ka push so dapat mugikan sa taas ang push to ano to go on accreditation."

It is important for the leadership and governance to support accreditation because if they do not provide support, you cannot push the process forward. Therefore, the initiative to pursue accreditation must come from the top. (C3)

b. Collaborative Organizational Engagement

Another similarity between the six cases is that the process of accreditation entails collaboration among the offices, committees, faculties, administrators, and other parties involved. The similarities lie in the process of coordination, role assignment, coaching, consultation, and constant communication aimed at eliminating resistance. Across all cases, the institutions use various context-specific strategies to foster collaboration. Case 1 employed formal, competency-based role assignment; Case 2 increased collaboration through coaching, management review, and benchmarking. Case 3 gave the Deans flexibility in handling the submission process; Case 4 utilized trust and good relations to

foster collaboration; and Case 5 did so through informative seminars, development, and workload adjustment. While Case 6 employed role assignment and shared responsibility. The approach of Case 6 is reflected in the following statement:

"We addressed these challenges by strengthening coordination mechanisms, clarifying responsibilities, and promoting open communication across units." (C6)

Hence, the response of the participants clearly indicates that collaboration transforms accreditation from a Quality Assurance office responsibility into shared institutional work.

c. Systematic Documentation and Process Management

Documentation and evidence management emerged as a common challenge across all cases. The institutions recognized that accreditation does not only require performing activities but also maintaining evidence in an organized manner. The similarity across all these cases is the attempt to standardize records, digitize documents, design databases, develop forms, and document their activities. Case 3 expressed challenges encountered in looking for documents and securing evidence.

"Every time we have accreditation, we are looking for data, so ibig sabihin hindi maayos mga evidences ginawa pero hindi naisulat or naisulat pero hindi alam kung nasaan na. So may mga ganun parin problema. Yun yung mga challenges in a preparing for accreditation. "

Every time we have accreditation, we are looking for data. So, it means that the evidence is not properly organized, it was done, but it was not documented, or it was documented, but no one knows where it is anymore. So, we still have those kinds of problems. Those are the challenges in preparing for accreditation. (C3)

d. Resource Optimization and Capacity Building

All cases experienced limitations related to time, manpower, budget, workload, facilities, incentives, or personnel capacity, although the dominant constraint differed by institution. Case 3 shared that their institution had adequate funds but limited time and available personnel.

"I think hindi man limitation talaga ang budget, available man siya ah we may allotment talaga for accreditation. Ang problema dyan is the availability of people who will do the work, conflict ba sa other activities so minsan walang time or maubusan ng time to do the work. Pero may people will do ano man sila voluntary man sila."

I think the budget is not really a limitation because it is available. Ah, we really have a budget allotment for accreditation. The problem is the availability of the

people who will do the work and whether the accreditation work conflicts with other activities. So, sometimes, they do not have enough time, or they run out of time to complete the work. However, there are people who are willing to do it voluntarily. (C3)

To cope, institutions used resource prioritization, phased implementation, resource sharing, workload credits, incentives, de-loading, professional development, and cross-functional collaboration. This is to show that resource scarcity was widespread, but each institution approached the challenge in its own way depending on the financial situation and organizational capability.

e. Continuous Improvement and Quality Culture

Across the cases, accreditation problems led to process alignment, policy changes, greater accountability, and greater acceptance of quality assurance efforts. Case 1 involved aligning faculty qualifications, research, and extension with the accreditation process; Case 2 involved developing a standards-based mindset through coaching, feedback, and benchmarking; Case 3 involved ISO stabilization of processes and a realistic approach to recommendations; Case 6 emphasized institutionalization and the efficiency of processes. The accreditation process is evident in Case 4, where the participant explained that accreditation had been institutionalized within the institution.

“Murag nahimo na siyang kultura na normal na lang siya... murag naka adapt na ang mga tao, kabalo na sila nga mao ni siya ang trabahoon mao ni siya ang expected sa atoa.”

It became part of the culture and has become normal. People have already adapted, and they know that this is part of their work and what is expected of them. (C4)

Case 5 shared that their institution implemented the regular use of SWOT analysis and compliance matrices as a strategy for continuous improvement. Through these, it helped the institution identify gaps, plan actions, and ensure alignment with regulatory requirements.

“The school regularly conducts and analyzes environmental scanning activities. The SWOT expectedly plays a major part in the strategic and annual planning of all academic and support units to help ensure compliance to regulatory requirements. Also, all academic programs are required to create a CHED-PSG compliance matrix to analyze gaps and make action plans.” (C5)

These findings suggest that quality culture becomes sustainable when accreditation recommendations are linked to planning, data, policy, and stakeholder learning. This implies that the research findings are consistent with the empirical study,

suggesting that accreditation may improve quality assurance; however, institutions may usually have problems in terms of leadership, cooperation, professional development, resistance from faculty, resources, and work overload (Kumar *et al.*, 2021; Addas, 2020; Iqbal, 2023; Claudio, 2023).

7.3 Insights in Navigating National and International Excellence Standards

To gain a deeper understanding of how institutions sustain quality assurance, this section provides the insights of the participants about their experiences in meeting the standards of excellence in the nation and internationally. These insights provide how accreditation impacted the planning process, governance, documentation, stakeholder involvement, and the creation of a quality culture within institutions.

a. Drives the Quality of Strategic Planning

Across the six cases, the impact of accreditation on the institution is its contribution to the quality of the planning process as it connects standards and recommendations with strategies, policies, budgeting, scheduling, performance measures, and follow up. The similarity of these cases is the idea of the participants that accreditation must be a continuous process within institutions and not just a once-in-a-while undertaking prior to the visit of the accrediting body. Cases 1, 5, and 6 stressed the alignment between the strategic plan and annual plan with the requirements of accreditation.

“The policies should really be in place so that we can make a certain kind of system. When everything is in the system, you don’t need to like document just for the sake of the accreditation.” (C1)

In the same way, Case 6 emphasized that embedding quality assurance into institutional planning allows recommendations to guide strategic improvements.

“Recommendations from accreditation bodies often inform our planning processes and guide strategic improvements. We communicate results through formal reports and structured action plans, ensuring that feedback is translated into measurable initiatives.” (C6)

Case 3 highlighted that the use of a bottom-up approach in planning and integrating accreditation standards into the institutional priorities and objectives enhanced the quality assurance processes through collaboration. Case 4 overemphasized the PDCA cycle, internal audits, end-of-year evaluation and policy revisions, while Case 2 emphasized the quarterly check-ups, scheduling and guidelines as well as submission of budget requests.

b. Enhanced the Culture for Institutional Quality

All cases recognized that quality assurance requires the participation of faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholders. They are similar in the importance of communication, orientation, consultation, role clarity, and leadership support in reducing resistance and sustaining quality practices.

Quality culture was sustained across all the case studies by means of communication, orientation, consultation, role clarification, leadership, and shared responsibility. While shared responsibility played an integral part in Case 1, continuous communication and orientation were highlighted in Case 2; broad participation in Case 3; town hall meetings and relations in Case 4; consultation and dissemination of information in Case 5; and accountability and role clarification in Case 6.

In addition, Case 1 emphasized that a culture of quality develops when faculty members view accreditation as a shared responsibility.

“Actually, accreditation is really part of the institution; actually, it should be like a moral obligation ba inherent to a faculty because our role as faculty is not just instruction, not assessment, extension or research, but also part of that is accreditation.” (C1)

In the same way, the consultative approach is depicted in Case 5 whereby the participant talked about the importance of information dissemination and consultation in maintaining the accreditation process.

“Information-dissemination to relevant stakeholders. Once people know the value of accreditation, resistance to changes will be minimal.” (C5)

c. Improved Governance, Policy and Documentation Processes

Across the institutions, documentation was recognized as essential for traceability, continuity, evaluation, and evidence-based decision-making. These practices indicate that documentation and governance systems play an important role in sustaining accreditation efforts and institutional quality assurance. Hence, this importance is reflected in Case 2, where the participant emphasized that documentation is necessary in supporting compliance and continuous quality improvement.

“Dili lang pwede nga mag meet lang dapat naa puy guidelines and policies na ma create para naay balikan ang mga future na mga bago na mga leaders so there's has to be aside from discussion everything has to be put in a guideline or policy for future na mga mag takeover para dili makalimtan, kana ang importante.”

But it's not enough just to meet and talk. We also need to create guidelines and policies based on those discussions so that there is something to refer to in the future, especially for new leaders who will take over. Everything should be documented in policies so nothing is forgotten; that is what is important. (C2)

Case 3 further supports this theme by showing how report sharing and consultation helped strengthen participation in quality assurance activities.

"We share the reports, and we also sit down with some units on how to work on it. There was also a time we disseminated it to all. We share it with the administrators; we also work with them." (C3)

d. Transformed Approach to Pursuing Institutional Excellence

Across all cases, accreditation transformed the meaning of excellence from mere successful completion of an external review process to one that involved evidence-based, measurable and developmental processes in institutions. Accreditation was seen in all cases as a significant factor for continuous development, effective systems, improved teaching and learning, stakeholder confidence, and institutional credibility.

Each institution had a particular focus. For instance, Case 1 had a focus on program development and faculty development. Case 2 was concerned with operational effectiveness and corrective action, while Case 4 put emphasis on innovation through PDCA, micro-credentials and mobility. Case 5 focused on measurable indicators like licensure results, rankings, satisfaction and linkages, while Case 6 put more emphasis on evidence-based decision-making and the accreditation process. In the same manner, Case 3 saw accreditation as an investment in governance, reputation and outcomes.

"So, it's an investment worth pursuing because ang result niya ah will also be improved governance, better or improved quality ah probably it will also motivate people to perform well kay kung may accreditation."

So, it's an investment worth pursuing because the result will improve governance, better or improved quality; probably it will also motivate people to perform well because of accreditation. (C3)

Likewise, Case 4 emphasized that accreditation should be implemented across programs, embracing it as a mechanism for institutional enhancement.

"Wala na namo gifocus didto sa mga programs na i-assess, gi across program namo siya Ma'am, so ibig sabihin katong recommendation nila dili lang katong program na ilang gi assess kundi across program gina implement gyud siya Ma'am oo so dako pud siyag natabang Ma'am. Ana ang mga contribution."

We no longer focus on the programs being assessed. We implemented them across all programs, Ma'am. This means that the recommendations were not applied only to the specific program being assessed, but they were implemented across the different programs. So, it contributed significantly. Those are some of the contributions. (C4)

The findings for insights in navigating national and international excellence standards indicate that all six cases viewed accreditation as a way of improving planning, development of quality culture, good governance and documentation, and a transformation of excellence into an evidence-based continuous process. Indeed, accreditation ensures accountability, transparency, continuous improvement, institutional performance and competitiveness (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023; Kumar *et al.*, 2021). The cross-case analysis clearly indicates that there is no universal strategy for successful accreditation but rather a similar quality strategy in line with the organizational context.

8. Implication and Concluding Remarks

This section presents the implications for practice and future research, as well as the concluding remarks drawn from the findings of the study.

8.1 Implications for Practice

The findings suggest that the role of accreditation in HEIs can no longer be solely seen in terms of compliance but also as a continuous process aimed at institutional development and quality improvement (Pramono & Widiyanto, 2020; Iqbal *et al.*, 2025). The implementation of the accreditation process in daily practice improves the quality of leadership, organization, and assurance.

The study highlights the importance of establishing centralized and well-coordinated quality assurance structures. QA offices should move beyond event-based accreditation preparation and develop sustainable systems for documentation, monitoring, evaluation, and feedback management. Institutions may benefit from investing in digital data management systems, centralized repositories, and evidence-tracking mechanisms to address recurring documentation challenges and improve accreditation readiness. Also, institutions can improve readiness through digitization, benchmarking, and data-driven decision-making to make accreditation more efficient and less burdensome.

Furthermore, effective accreditation needs effective leadership and teamwork among administrators, faculty, and employees as well. The issues that may arise, like workload pressures, resource constraints, and reluctance to change, underscore the necessity to work more effectively, train, and develop professionals (Iqbal *et al.*, 2025). Competencies of faculty and employees related to documentation, outcomes assessments, research, and quality assurance will promote cooperation and help overcome implementation problems.

Therefore, the findings demonstrate that despite accreditation serving as a catalyst for improvement, it needs a substantial investment in terms of manpower, financial, and technological resources. As a result, there is a need to develop support structures that will increase institutional capacity for quality assurance, especially when the institution lacks sufficient resources. The requirement for such support structures stems from the

results showing that many accreditation projects demand considerable investments in human, financial, and technological capital (Addas, 2020; Claudio, 2023).

For educational leaders, the results indicate that the process of accreditation should be viewed as a shared institutional responsibility supported by strategic leadership that fosters collaboration and continuous quality improvement. In this way, accreditation becomes not only a requirement but also a way of achieving institutional excellence and effective educational governance.

The outcome of this research suggests that, for educational leaders, accreditation should be seen as an institution's collective task, enabled by strategic leadership, a cooperative organizational culture, and a continuous quality improvement environment. In this regard, accreditation will not only serve as a means to earn recognition but also as a tool that helps institutions achieve excellence and efficient educational governance. As a result, accreditation becomes a continuous quality improvement tool through the cooperation of institutions, leaders, and quality assurance processes (Jafarov, 2024).

8.2 Implications for Future Research

Further research can be conducted from this study in the field of accreditation and educational management in higher education institutions. Given that this study is limited to six (6) HEIs, other researchers could consider adding more public and private HEIs from other areas or regions to get multiple views about the concept of accreditation and the quality assurance process. Other researchers might conduct longitudinal studies regarding the impact of accreditation.

In addition, a quantitative or mixed-method approach can also be considered for examining the relationship between accreditation practices and the performance of institutions. Another possible aspect for future research is the role of leadership styles and management styles in sustaining accreditation readiness and quality. Since this study focused on the experiences and motivation of HEIs towards achieving quality standards, future studies may utilize comparative studies to provide a deeper understanding of how accreditation practices evolve over time and how institutions sustain quality assurance initiatives despite organizational and environmental challenges.

8.3 Concluding Remarks

Through a qualitative multiple case study design, the findings revealed that accreditation is perceived as a process that is strategic and institution-wide, and which makes a great contribution to institutional development and improvement. It is also evident that across all cases, challenges were experienced by HEIs, and these include resource constraints, workload pressures, resistance to change and documentation. Nonetheless, the institutions have made an effort through cooperation, strong leadership, quality improvement, and system improvements to address these issues. Likewise, educational institutions started to move beyond complying with the quality assurance requirement to a more pervasive culture of quality, responsibility, and accountability. Moreover,

accreditation and certification are important mechanisms for ensuring excellence in education and institutional management (Narimani, 2026).

In addition, this study is also relevant in the area of Educational Management because it offers a deeper understanding of accreditation as both quality assurance and a transformative educational process. It will also encourage higher education institutions to critically assess the current systems of accreditation, find ways of improving them, and align institutional priorities with national and international quality standards.

The study generally emphasizes the importance of the accreditation process when it is part of the institutional operations and treated as a long-term commitment to academic excellence, organizational development, and stakeholder accountability.

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