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General trends on the impacts of evidence-based university accreditation on quality assurance enhancement

Nurali Kairanbayev[1], Solomon Arulraj David[2]
[1]Faculty of Oriental Studies, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
[2]Faculty of Education, The British University in Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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ABSTRACT

Traditional accreditation process although has relevant impacts on quality assurance in higher education. Research and practices have shown the value of emerging evidence-based university accreditation. The study therefore aims to understand the impacts of evidence-based university accreditation on quality assurance enhancement. The research relied on literature review and document analysis as suitable methods. The study's results demonstrated that the final decision for academic accreditation should be based on evidence that all stakeholders took part in quality assurance, namely staff and students. This study also explores the university accreditation practices in the United Kingdom (UK), United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Kazakhstan. The analysis presented here allows us to compare and discuss the practices of three different quality assurance practices. The three cases Quality Assurance Agency for higher education (QAA), Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), and Independent Kazakh Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA) indicate relevant use of evidence-based approaches to university accreditations that support quality assurance enhancement, given the explicit approaches grounded in data and evidence. The future of evidence-based approach will be furthered with the support of technology and sophisticated tools that will support explicit policies and practices. This research is expected to benefit researchers, policy makers and practitioners in quality assurance.

Corresponding Author:

Nurali Kairanbayev
Faculty of Oriental Studies, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University
Al-Farabi Avenue, 71, Almaty, Kazakhstan
Email: kairanbayev.n.s@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the top priorities for national educational policies in many countries is the development of an efficient system of providing as long as reviewing the quality of education. The university's high academic standards can guarantee both respectable rankings and long-term competitiveness in both the local and global education markets. This is why, in the United Kingdom (UK), which has a long history of quality assurance, universities are encouraged to improve and maintain their quality control systems. It is agreed that formal accreditation helps universities to facilitate quality enhancement. Over the last few decades, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kazakhstan have paid close attention to the issue of higher education quality and accreditation. These countries' regulatory authorities developed their quality standards based on international experience, while also considering their cultural and social characteristics.

Internationalization of higher education has pushed new dynamics for quality assurance by means of competition and quality standards that have helped higher education to transform teaching and learning.

Since increasing the prestige of universities has become their primary task, it is possible due to accreditation and quality assurance. So, what are accreditation and quality assurance? To answer the question, we will try to clarify these concepts.

Accreditation is a quality assessment process of an academic program and/or institution to validate the authenticity of the program and the institution [1]. This voluntary process became one of the most used mechanisms for quality assurance across the world [2], [3]. University accreditation has multiple benefits. Kumar *et al* [4] claim that accreditation is a seal of quality that benefits improving academic reputation, increasing the number of enrolled students and funding, and advancing research and innovation.

According to Vlăsceanu *et al*. [5], accreditation is required to formally acknowledge that specific predetermined minimum criteria or standards have been met. Ghooi [6] argues that accreditation may give accredited organizations a competitive advantage over non-accredited organizations as a mark of excellence that goes beyond regulatory compliance. It includes procedures to collect evidence in order to make a decision. The methods used to gather such evidence are identical to those used in audits, evaluations, and external reviews [7]. All accreditation processes involve three specific steps. First is the self-evaluation process (or internal evaluation), where the staff of the institution (or faculty) evaluate their own university (academic program) according to the set of standards and criteria of the accrediting body and prepare a report. Then, the accrediting organization selects a team of external experts who conduct onsite visits and interview the faculty, staff, and students as well. As a result, the team of external experts prepare an assessment report and a recommendation for the accrediting body. Finally, based on the quality standards, the commission evaluates the evidence and recommendations, and makes the final formal decision [8].

University programs and higher education institutions themselves can be improved and ensured by accreditation [9]. According to Mavil [10], accreditation is an essential tool for ensuring the quality of higher education and is a vital factor in the assessment of learning outcomes. Many accreditation systems focus on the approach that evaluates the process of education. The process-oriented approach assesses learning efficiency according to accreditation standards. It mainly measures the mission and purpose of the academic institution or program, the existence of qualified faculty, and the consistency of the curriculum with certain requirements. There is also another approach that is outcome-based which focuses on the actual achievements of students or graduates [11]. In terms of the accreditation process, outcomes are necessary skills and knowledge students must know and can apply by the time of graduation.

As to quality assurance, it is the internal and external form of assessment of effectiveness, performance, quality monitoring, evaluation or review of colleges and universities [12]. Vlăsceanu *et al.* [5] suggest that quality assurance is a term which refers to ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a system of higher education or programs. Skolnik [3] characterized quality assurance as a political process aiming to foster improvement in education. Its effectiveness depends on students' participation in quality assessment [13], university ranking [14]. Assurance of quality methods includes external examination, academic audit, assessment, and accreditation. Any of these methods involve developing or establishing standards and applying those standards to a program or institution [15]. Research on quality assurance across the world endorses the impact of evidence-based quality assurance. However, it might be good to explore this context to provide exemplary cases. Hence, this study explores the university accreditation practices in the UK, UAE, and Kazakhstan. We chose these three countries to compare and analyze accrediting procedures since they have different higher education systems, accreditation methods, and quality assurance models.

Compared to Kazakhstan and the UAE, the UK has a longer history of incorporating academic standards into its higher education system. British universities developed a unique system of external examiners to maintain academic standards [16]. Due to the UAE's high demand and rapid expansion of higher education institutions in the early 2000s, a regulatory body was required to guarantee the quality of education. Established in 2000 with the aim of maintaining quality, the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) remains as the principal mechanism that allows the federal ministry to promote standards for education throughout the country [17]. In Kazakhstan, the development of quality assurance has been a long and complex process. As a result, there has been a noticeable improvement in the assurance of higher education's quality. A decentralized quality assurance stage has replaced the centralized control phase in the quality control system [18]. This study is expected to benefit the ongoing research on quality assurance. It will particularly shed light on the impact of evidence-based university accreditation on enhancing quality assurance.

Evidence based university accreditation is mainly an emerging practice that embraces the use of clearly stated standards upon which the quality is measured and evaluated. According to Achterberg [19], an evidence-based accreditation's purpose is to evaluate all of the available data, apply the best of it, integrate the resources, and create informed recommendations and public policy. Ansmann and Seyfried [20] support the importance of an evidence-based approach and believe that it can improve and enhance the quality of academic programs or courses.

Beerkens [14] believes that “evidence-based” policy is an alternative approach for quality assurance. In addition to practical (professional) knowledge, she emphasizes the significance of scientific knowledge to make decisions. According to Andreani *et al*. [21], evidence-based approach can help to refine the systems of accreditation and quality assurance. Pankowska [22] noted that evidence-based practice is a commonly used scientific approach to make decisions based on methodological research, evaluation and using research results.

The "evidence-based approach" requires a more comprehensive understanding of what evidence is and how it fits into the larger field of quality improvement and the policymaking process. In this approach, the collection of evidence is a tool for quality improvement, the evidence itself can be adjusted and changed by the perceptions, interpretations, and arguments of the different stakeholders involved in this process [19]. Achterberg [19] suggested that in theory, a person or group of people should be able to evaluate the same research evidence and reach the same conclusions with an open and thorough process.

Evidence, in its basic form, is a compilation of information used to claim that something is true. In terms of the accreditation process, evidence is different from information, data, or facts. It always required interpretation and reflection for evidence. Sound evidence is not just a list of unrelated facts or statistics, but considered, well-interpreted, and mutually reinforced conclusions. It can be concluded that both quality assurance and accreditation in higher education have similar goals and objectives, despite their differences. Moreover, accreditation is one form of quality assurance, whereas an evidence-based approach is a quality improvement instrument. The study is influenced by stakeholders theory as it offers relevant insight on the effective engagement of relevant stakeholders on quality assurance process [23].

Modern accreditation bodies prioritize the university's infrastructure, resources, faculty qualifications, and curriculum structure when conducting their work. However, they pay little attention to information about the outcomes of educational programs and universities, which we believe is a direct indicator of the effectiveness of the learning process. Furthermore, it is argued that evidence-based university accreditation has significant impacts on quality improvement. Therefore, the study aims to understand the impacts of evidence-based university accreditation on quality assurance. The objectives of the study are:

- To understand the nature of evidence-based practices and effective quality assurance.
- To understand the relationship between evidence-based practices and effective quality assurance.
- To explore the impact of evidence-based practices in the UK, UAE, and Kazakhstan.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study's approach includes a content analysis of the accrediting requirements for higher education programs. The analysis consists of accreditation standards documents from the UAE, the UK, and Kazakhstan. These are listed in Tables 1-6 and have complete references in resources. The analysis in each case relies on the December 2012 version of the accreditation standards, which are publicly accessible on the websites of the accrediting organizations. Links to additional sources of information that were not included in the analysis are sometimes provided on the accrediting websites. The argument that the primary accrediting criteria document has the biggest impact on the accreditation process since it is the one that is reviewed the most. The analysis focused on the profession's undergraduate degree in order to limit it to accreditation requirements. Additionally, graduate program accreditation requirements were ignored considering they were beyond the scope of the present study.

The research was conducted by using a triangulation method of collected data: case method [24] for UK, UAE, and Kazakhstan and document analysis [25] for the standards of accreditation agencies (Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), CAA, Independent Kazakh Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA)). In qualitative research, document analysis, similar to other analytical techniques, involves the examination and interpretation of data in order to extract meaning, comprehend, and generate empirical information [26]. The results are analyzed using thematic analysis [27]. The study explores the main research question: what are the impacts of evidence-based university accreditation on quality assurance? The following are the sub-research questions:

- What is the nature of evidence-based practices and effective quality assurance?
- What is the relationship between evidence-based practices and effective quality assurance?
- What are the impacts of evidence-based practices in the UK, UAE, and Kazakhstan?

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We reviewed three accreditation standards of quality assurance agencies from the UK (QAA), UAE (CAA), and Kazakhstan (IQAA). These agencies are identified in Table 1. In conducting an analysis of the standards there were six key points that became the focus of the discussion, which are: i) general information

about quality assurance organizations in three countries (UK, UAE, Kazakhstan); ii) standards concerning students; iii) graduates and alumni engagement; iv) faculty; v) research; and vi) university programs. The existing quality assurance agencies in the UK, the UAE, and Kazakhstan are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 illustrates the quality assurance agencies in the UK, the UAE, and Kazakhstan. The quality assurance agency for higher education (QAA) is a nonprofit and non-governmental organization established during 1997 in the UK. The commission for academic accreditation (CAA) is a governmental agency established in the UAE during 2000. The IQAA is a nonprofit and non-governmental agency established during 2008 in Kazakhstan.

Table 1. Existing quality assurance agencies in the UK, the UAE, and Kazakhstan

Country	Organization name	Type	Est. date
UK	The QAA for higher education	Nonprofit, non-governmental	1997
UAE	The CAA	Governmental	2000
Kazakhstan	The IQAA	Nonprofit, non-governmental	2008

3.1. Quality assurance organizations in the UK, the UAE, and Kazakhstan

In the UK, universities are responsible for maintaining standards and quality themselves, with the QAA providing external control. For higher education systems in the UK, QAA functions as the main regulator and framework for quality assurance. Established by the heads of universities and colleges in the UK, QAA is a nonprofit organization and one of the world providers for quality assurance and standards. Currently they have over 300 universities and colleges as their members across the UK. The membership of QAA is voluntary in England and mandatory in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland [28].

The primary aim of the QAA is "to ensure that students and learners experience the highest possible quality of education" [29]. Its mission is to protect educational standards and guarantee the quality and international recognition of higher education in the UK [30]. To achieve this mission QAA collaborates with different higher education stakeholders, their academic staff, students, and employers. QAA conducts external examinations of universities and colleges every 4 or 6 years on a regular basis. QAA also performs an external review for taught programs, research, and teacher training.

Filippakou [16] sheds light on the QAA's historical evolution and outlines its complex mechanism. He notes that the quality assurance procedure used by QAA is intended to gather data and connect it to institutional and other evidence. Additionally, it assesses higher education providers' teaching and learning infrastructure, paying special attention to academic criteria [16].

The main procedures operated by QAA were explored by Brennan and Williams [30], describing in detail five main quality assurance schemes: institutional audit, qualifications frameworks, subject benchmark statements, program specifications and codes of practice. Alderman and Brown [31] outline the audit process of the QAA's quality assurance. They point out that the audit examines the efficiency of a quality assurance system in universities, their programs and standards quality. Moreover, the audit looks at the information provided about standards of universities and focuses on the accuracy, completeness, and reliability of it.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is a federal authority of the education system in the UAE. The CAA is its main quality assurance body for public and private institutions. Universities and their degree programs must be accredited by the CAA in order to be legally operating in the whole country. The CAA has established specific curriculum requirements for programs, including credit accreditation, general education requirements for undergraduate levels, and a focus on graduate-level research [32].

In addition to allowing universities to promote their programs, accept students, and have their degrees recognized throughout the country, accreditation also gives graduates the opportunity to work in the public sector, which provides higher pay and better working conditions than the private sector [33]. The UAE has made great efforts to guarantee the implementation of global standards in the higher education system. They created and improved national quality assurance by collaborating with international professional institutions in the USA and the UK [34]. When analyzing the accreditation process, it should be noted that it consists of two complex stages: document submission and an evaluation of the university's infrastructure. Additionally, each academic program goes through its own accreditation process only after the university's accreditation is completed [35].

In 1999, the government of Kazakhstan published the Law "On Education" in which accreditation of higher education institutions gained legal entitlement. In accordance with this law and its amendments, accreditation was entrusted to Kazakhstan's Ministry of Education and Science (MES). When Kazakhstan became a full member of the Bologna Process in 2010, the accreditation procedure had to be implemented by non-profit and independent organizations. The following year, the state introduced amendments to the "Law

on Education," and accreditation of universities was delegated to non-profit organizations. The status of accreditation became voluntary, but for accredited universities, the attestation process of MES was not required any more. Moreover, according to the amendments in 2015 to the "Law on Education," institutional and program accreditation became a necessary condition for universities to be awarded government tuition grants for students [36].

Kazakhstan's first independent quality assurance system was established in 2008. It is the IQAA which is a non-profit organization. Its creation stimulated the development of the national accreditation system in the country [37]. IQAA conducts institutional and program accreditation of universities, educational research centers, and technical and vocational education and training organizations.

The mission of IQAA is to increase and promote the quality of education, competitiveness at the local and international levels of higher education institutions in Kazakhstan, quality culture in academic institutions, and mass consciousness. IQAA is a member of The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR); an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA) and other international quality assurance organizations [38].

The IQAA developed their accreditation standards in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The IQAA accreditation procedures consist of the following main stages: Preparation of the self-assessment report; Conducting an external evaluation; Analysis of the report of the external expert group and consideration by the Accreditation Council; Post-accreditation monitoring [38].

3.2. Standards concerning students

In general, each of these three standards gives opportunities for students to evaluate the educational process. Student involvement in the quality assurance process is significant to many researchers and agencies for higher education quality assurance. For instance, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education encourages involving students in the quality assurance process, as participation in external assessments increases credibility. In the opinion of Elassy [39], student involvement in quality assurance has three benefits: i) it informs quality assurance teams about students' opinions; ii) it provides validity to quality information; and iii) it improves higher education quality. Table 2 presents the evidence concerning students. Evidence concerning students is presented in Table 2 as per the standards of QAA, CAA, and IQAA. The three standards consider student engagement at various aspects such as curriculum, instruction, assessment, and other general quality aspects.

Table 2. Evidence concerning students

Organization	Accreditation standards
QAA standards	- Engaging students in self and peer-assessment activities. - Regularly obtaining feedback from students. - Students' feedback is gathered and acted upon for the module or course. - Development of both academic and professional skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving or teamwork). - Students are provided with external professional support services and careers services.
CAA standards	- Opportunity to evaluate programs, courses, the quality of instruction, teaching and learning methodologies. - Students are provided with career development services that help in career planning and employment.
IQAA standards	- Opinions and interests of students, employers, alumni, and other stakeholders are considered during the program's development. - All internal and external quality assurance procedures involve student participation. - Students' engagement in the development of the curriculum, the teaching process, and the evaluation methods. - Participation of students in funded scientific research, publications, competitions, Olympiads, and creative and research endeavors at all levels.

3.3. Graduates and alumni engagement

All three standards focus on building relationships with university graduates while also getting them involved in teaching or course evaluation. According to previous studies [40], [41], alumni can provide valuable insights 41into the quality and relevance of education from an external point of view. Table 3 illustrates evidence concerning graduates and alumni engagement. The table presents the evidence concerning graduates and alumni engagements at the standards of QAA, CAA, and IQAA. The three standards consider graduates and alumni engagement in understanding program effectiveness, employability, career advancement and other relevant aspects.

Table 3. Evidence concerning graduates and alumni engagement

Organization	Accreditation standards
QAA standards	- Engagement of students and alumni to design, monitor, review and enhance learning and teaching activities. - Assessing levels of satisfaction among students, alumni, and employers. - Involvement of employers and other external stakeholders, former students for course feedback and critical commentary.
CAA standards	- Availability of indicators demonstrating the program's effectiveness based on graduates' employment. - Assessing the employability of graduates. - Establishing communication with alumni.
IQAA standards	- Making the best management decisions based on the following information: graduates' employability, advancement in their careers and the level of salary. - Establishing dialogue with university graduates. - Survey conducted regularly to evaluate employers' satisfaction with graduates' educational backgrounds.

3.4. Evidence concerning faculty

In accordance with several studies, better working conditions for academic staff demonstrate an improvement in the quality of education [42], [43] and enhance their academic performance [44], [45]. Therefore, universities in the UAE are required by CAA standards to provide educators with an adequate salary, and IQAA requires attractive workplace conditions and achievement-based benefits. Moreover, the IQAA highlights the value of maintaining a balance in teachers' work, which positively affects lecturers' productivity [46], while the QAA stresses the significance of professional development for teaching staff. The QAA and CAA standards also emphasize the significance of a system of mentors for new teaching staff. This practice, as stated by Fowler [47], may develop knowledge and skills in research and teaching for a new teaching staff. Table 4 presents the evidence concerning faculty. Table 4 captures the evidence concerning faculty from QAA, CAA, and IQAA. The three standards highlight the relevant areas of engaging staff towards quality enhancement in various areas such as curriculum, teaching, assessment, and institutional advancement.

Table 4. Evidence concerning faculty

Organization	Accreditation standards
QAA standards	- Engaging new staff in appropriate induction and mentoring activities. - Faculty participate in ongoing professional growth to enhance and broaden their teaching abilities and critically evaluate their methods. - Availability of faculty development activities to meet the demands of teaching, learning, and research.
CAA standards:	- Engagement in the decision-making process for developing programs, curricula, assessments, and improving quality and other institutional advancement activities. - Opportunity for regular evaluation of programs and courses. - Adequate, sensitive to market demands, salaries, and benefits. - Policies for evaluating faculty teaching methods, promotion, nepotism, and inappropriate employee relationships. - Orientation system in place for newly appointed faculty. - Workload consists of all a faculty member's responsibilities, including administrative tasks.
IQAA standards	- The balance between academic, research, methodical, organizational, and educational activities. - The availability of appealing working conditions. - Motivation mechanisms for high pedagogical skills, scientific results, and development of the quality.

3.5. Evidence concerning research

It should be noted that the QAA emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensive assistance to young researchers for them to conduct research, whereas the CAA and IQAA standards suggest student participation in the research process. The IQAA additionally considered the commercialization of the research, which is an important factor for Kazakhstan [48]. In the educational process, research findings are required to be used according to the CAA and IQAA requirements. Table 5 illustrates the evidence concerning research. Table 5 presents the evidence concerning research as per QAA, CAA, and IQAA. The three standards have similar approaches to quality indicators for research such as establishing research culture, holding strong commitment to support research, publishing in top tier journals, and disseminating research outcomes.

3.6. Evidence concerning university programs

According to the study Bloxham *et al.* [49], external examining is an effective method of assuring quality standards. It also helps ensure that course standards and assessments are appropriate [50]. The necessity for external examiners to evaluate the quality of courses and education is represented in all three standards. While IQAA emphasizes the importance of inclusive education, CAA standards focus on workload requirements. The CAA particularly points out the balance of teaching hours for different degrees, which is not mentioned in the IQAA or QAA standards. Our findings confirm the effect of the stakeholders

theory on quality assurance process [24], which states that universities' collaboration with stakeholders at various levels to ensure quality education leads to long-term development and prosperity. To accomplish this, universities should consider the needs of all stakeholders. The evidence concerning university programs is presented at Table 6. Table 6 shows the evidence concerning university programs. The three standards such as QAA, CAA, and IQAA, offer relevant quality indicators for good quality university programs. They highlight the required credit hours, resources, modes of delivery, employability, and other suitable aspects.

Table 5. Evidence concerning research

Organization name	Accreditation standards
QAA standards	- To support students' learning, faculty rely on professional activity, academic endeavors, and research - Encouragement and guidance to the research student on the submission of conference papers and articles referred to refereed journals - Supportive research environment and inclusive for all research students - Research students are supported to develop subject-specific, research, communication, and other skills they require to become effective researchers
CAA standards	a. The university is required to have: - a comprehensive collection of bibliographic resources - policies and procedures for research support at the institution - policies that promote student involvement in research - 5% of the minimum budget of the total operational expenditure to support faculty research - administrative support, equipment, and facilities to promote research b. The institution ought to update its curricula based on the findings of research conducted by faculty members and postgraduate students
IQAA standards	- Availability of fundamental and/or applied research, experimental developments, and their adherence to qualification requirements - The availability of mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of research - The presence of technology parks, research institutes/centers, and other research units - Encouraging faculty members to conduct research - Academic staff publish their research in international scientific journals - Developed conditions for the integration of education, innovation, and science - Involving undergraduate and graduate students in research and publications in an active way - Implementing scientific research findings into the educational process of a university or production - The commercialization of research - Access to international research grants and opportunities for cooperation in the field of science

Table 6. Evidence concerning university programs

Organization	Accreditation standards
QAA standards	- Engaging an external examiner to review the courses - Course design, development and approval processes are monitored, reviewed, and enhanced
CAA standards	a. A university must: - include innovation and entrepreneurship skills, sustainability principles, teamwork, leadership into learning objectives for programs and courses as well as the content of courses. - involve members of external advisory committees or industry representatives for each field or programs in the periodic review of curricula. - provide workload assignments for faculty: i) in undergraduate programs, terminal degree holders teach 24 credit hours or their equivalent each academic year; ii) 18 credit hours or its equivalent each academic year for teaching graduate programs or a combination of undergraduate and graduate courses; iii) 6 credit hours, or equivalent, per semester for part-time faculty. (It is not permitted to assign faculty teaching loads that exceed the above-mentioned restrictions) - have a policy for classifying student study modes as full-time or part-time
IQAA standards	- Continuously evaluate, adjust, and monitor their curricula to satisfy the rising demands of society, the labor market, and students - Involvement of employers, companies, and students in the creation of educational programs - Involving corporate partners in professional practice organization and its availability for students - Meeting the needs of different student groups, including international, full-time, employed, part-time, or disabled - Low-income students have access to social support services - Existence of a service for employment of graduates - Employers can suggest a list of disciplines to be included in the curriculum - Educational programs have external expertise (reviews), as well as reference and information resources

4. CONCLUSION

Evidence-based practice is a process that involves collecting available data to make effective decisions. Accreditation's aim is to improve outcomes for quality assurance. Additionally, effective quality assurance is a systematic process of evaluating the quality of higher education. Moreover, its effectiveness primarily depends on the participation of students, graduates, and other stakeholders in this process.

The following similarities between the standards QAA, CAA, and IQAA were discovered: first, students and graduates can assess the educational process, including instruction, courses, and curricula, in all three standards; second, external examiners are required to evaluate the quality of courses in all three standards. However, we also found noticeable differences between them. For instance, the QAA standard emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensive assistance to young researchers for them to conduct research, whereas the CAA and IQAA standards suggest student participation in the research process. Furthermore, the CAA particularly points out the balance of teaching hours for different degrees, which is not mentioned in the IQAA or QAA standards.

For universities, accreditation is a significant achievement since it is a seal of quality. The final decision for accreditation ought to be evidence-based and effectively evaluated. That is why the results of this study may be used by accreditation agencies, government bodies intended to improve the quality of higher education systems, and universities. Three notable limitations affected this study. First, evidence-based practices are time- and resource-consuming processes. Second, the study was based on the collected data from the standards, which may evolve over time. Finally, future research on evidence-based accreditation is required due to the shortage of existing data. To conclude, the current study, which compares quality assurance practices in three countries, may provide relevant insight into the similarities and differences in how countries manage quality assurance requirements.

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Nurali Kairanbayev	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Solomon Arulraj David	✓	✓		✓			✓			✓		✓		

C : **C**onceptualization
M : **M**ethodology
So : **So**ftware
Va : **Va**lidation
Fo : **Fo**rmal analysis
I : **I**nvestigation
R : **R**esources
D : **D**ata Curation
O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft
E : Writing - Review & **E**diting
Vi : **Vi**sualization
Su : **Su**pervision
P : **P**roject administration
Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition

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There is no conflict of interest in this research.

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BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS

Nurali Kairanbayev is a Ph.D. candidate, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan. His research focuses on higher education and research, Arabic language, history, and policy. He can be contacted at email: kairanbayev.n.s@gmail.com.

Solomon Arulraj David is an associate professor of education at the British University in Dubai, UAE. He has a master's and doctorate in education from KULeuven, Belgium. He has worked in India, South Africa prior to the current position in the UAE. His research interests are comparative international higher education, educational management, leadership, and policy. He can be contacted at email: solomon.david@buid.ac.ae.