

Higher Education Accreditation in View of International Contemporary Attitudes

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Abstract

Accreditation can be seen as one of several complementary measures in a quality assurance system, and the starting point is the need to maintain and improve good quality in institutions of higher education. Accreditation can play a more or less dominant role in the field of different measures that aim at monitoring, steering, recognizing and ensuring quality assurance in higher education. The frameworks for accreditation and external quality assurance vary from country to country, but generally follow three basic forms: the European model of central control of quality assurance by state educational ministries (Egypt follows this model); the United States (US) model of decentralized quality assurance combining limited state control with market competition; and, the British model in which the state essentially ceded responsibility for quality assurance to self-accrediting universities.

Introduction

Throughout the last two decades, governments around the world have raised new questions about the quality and relevance of their higher education systems. This new questioning, and general shift towards more formal systems of quality assurance, can be seen as a response to the increased size, complexity and diversity of the higher education sector under conditions approaching mass higher education.

In response to significant growth in cross-border higher education, UNESCO and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed the Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education to encourage governments and other stakeholders. These stakeholders include higher education institutions, student bodies, and organizations responsible for quality assurance, accreditation, and academic and professional recognition. Each of these entities is charged to take action for safeguards against low-quality services (Tabuchi, 2007). There are a number of interrelated factors that can be referred to in order to explain the importance of the quality assurance movement of the past twenty years. First, the concerns for a potential decline of academic standards against the background of mass higher education; second, key stakeholders, especially businesses, professional bodies and employers organizations, lost confidence in the traditional academic quality management capacities and in the ability of higher education institutions to quantitatively and qualitatively match the output of institutions with the needs of modern workplaces and labor. The third factor is budget restrictions and fiscal crises that led to stagnating or declining government funding per student and a pressure to increase efficiency in public expenditure; fourth, institutions were expected to meet the demands of an increasingly 'evaluative state' for greater public accountability; fifth, the higher education environment itself became more competitive with the erosion of traditional student recruitment networks, growing mobility of students, increased mobility of professionals and academics, the pressure of private institutions; and finally, a growing public demand for more transparency of the higher education system (Damme, 2002).

Accreditation can be seen as “one of several complementary measures in a quality assurance system, and the starting point is the need to maintain and improve good quality in institutions of higher education. Evaluations will normally assess to what extent programs or institutions are meeting the levels of quality set before, whereas accreditation passes a verdict on whether programs, degrees or institutions meet certain outside standards or requirements. The specific object of accreditation is to certify a defined standard of quality, although it may be imbedded in a larger evaluation process with multiple aims...” (European Network for Quality Assurance [ENQA], 2001, p. 7). Accreditation can play a more or less dominant role in the field of different measures that aim at monitoring, steering, recognizing and quality assuring higher education (Eaton, 2003).

The Concept of Accreditation

The term accreditation is not a precise one, it has many dimensions. “In one sense, it expresses the abstract notion of a formal authorizing power, acting through official decisions on the approval (or not) of institutions or study programs. In another sense, it refers to the issuing of a quality label to institutions or programs. In both cases, a judgment is reached through certain assessment processes” (ENQA, 2001, p.7). Accreditation can be defined in several ways, as in the following examples:

Accreditation is “a process of external quality review used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and educational programs for quality assurance and quality improvement” (Council for Higher Education Accreditation [CHEA], 2002, p. 1)

Accreditation is “The process by which a non-governmental or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or of a specific educational program in order to formally recognize it as having met certain predetermined minimal criteria or standards. The result of this process is usually the awarding of a status (a yes/no decision), of recognition, and sometimes of a license to operate within a time-limited validity” (Vlăsceanu & Others, 2004, p. 19).

Thus, the term accreditation has the following characteristics: it gives acceptance (or not) that a certain standard is met in higher education programs or institutions; it always involves a benchmarking assessment; its verdicts are based solely on quality criteria, and include a binary element and are always either “yes” or “no” (ENQA, 2001).

Aims of Accreditation

Generally, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) (Western Association of Schools and Colleges [WASC], 2001) sees accreditation as a process aiming at:

- Assuring the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an accredited institution has demonstrated it meets the Commission’s Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has been successfully reviewed under Commission Standards;
- Promoting deep institutional engagement with issues of educational effectiveness and student learning, and developing and sharing good practices in assessing and improving the teaching and learning process;

- Developing and applying Standards to review and improve educational quality and institutional performance, and validating these Standards and revising them through ongoing research and feedback;
- Promoting within institutions a culture of evidence where indicators of performance are regularly developed and data collected to inform institutional decision making, planning, and improvement;
- Developing systems of institutional review and evaluation that are adaptive to institutional context and purposes, that build on institutional evidence and support rigorous reviews, and reduce the burden and cost of accreditation; and
- Promoting the active interchange of ideas among public and independent institutions that furthers the principles of improved institutional performance, educational effectiveness, and the process of peer review.

Functions of Accreditation

The U.S. Department of Education has indicated that the accreditation process has to meet the following functions (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2009):

- Verifying that an institution or program meets established standards;
- Assisting prospective students in identifying acceptable institutions;
- Assisting institutions in determining the acceptability of transfer credits;
- Helping to identify institutions and programs for the investment of public and private funds;
- Protecting an institution against harmful internal and external pressure;
- Creating goals for self-improvement of weaker programs and stimulating a general rising of standards among educational institutions;
- Involving the faculty and staff comprehensively in institutional evaluation and planning;
- Establishing criteria for professional certification and licensure and for upgrading courses offering such preparation; and
- Providing one of several considerations used as a basis for determining eligibility for Federal assistance.

Characteristics of Accreditation

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (2008) adheres to the following fundamental characteristics of accreditation:

- Participation in the accreditation process is voluntary and is an earned and renewable status.
- Member institutions develop, amend, and approve accreditation requirements.
- The process of accreditation is representative, responsive, and appropriate to the types of institutions accredited.
- Accreditation is self-regulation.
- Accreditation requires institutional commitment and engagement.
- Accreditation is based upon a peer review process.
- Accreditation requires an institutional commitment to student learning and achievement.

- Accreditation acknowledges an institution's prerogative to articulate its mission within the recognized context of higher education and its responsibility to show that it is accomplishing its mission.
- Accreditation expects an institution to develop a balanced governing structure designed to promote institutional autonomy and flexibility of operation.
- Accreditation expects an institution to ensure that its programs are complemented by support structures and resources that allow for the total growth and development of its students.

The Importance of Accreditation

In the USA, usage accreditation can play an important role to (Eaton, 2006b):

- Assuring quality: Accreditation is the primary means by which colleges, universities and programs assure quality to students and the public.
- Access to federal and state funds: Accreditation is required for access to federal funds such as student aid and other federal programs.
- Engendering private sector confidence: Individuals and foundations look for evidence of accreditation when making decisions about private giving.
- Easing transfer: Accreditation is important to students for smooth transfer of courses and programs among colleges, universities and programs.

Accreditation can be also seen as a key to sustaining a culture of quality; a key to sustaining core academic values of higher education; a tool to serve students, employers, and government by assisting them in making crucial decisions about college attendance or supporting higher education (Eaton, 2003). Obtaining (and keeping) institutional accreditation is important to provide highly regarded assurance to the educational community, the general public, and other organizations that looking for the university graduates; to encourage intuitional quality improvement through continuous self- evaluation; to create a culture of evidence that is critically needed in this age of accountability (United Arab Emirates University [UAE], 2005).

Possible Accreditation Actions

The accreditation process takes place on a cycle that may range from every few years to as many as ten years. The result of this process may be one of the following four cases (New York State Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education, 2007):

- Accreditation without conditions: The institution is in full compliance with the standards for institutional accreditation.
- Accreditation with conditions: The institution is in substantial compliance with the standards for institutional accreditation. The institution has demonstrated the intent and capacity to rectify identified deficiencies and to strengthen practice in marginally acceptable matters within no more than two years.
- Probationary accreditation: The institution is in partial compliance with institutional accreditation standards and may reasonably be expected to meet accreditation standards within no more than two years. During this period, the institution provides documentation of compliance with standards. A follow-up visit may be required following provision of a required report.
- Denial of accreditation: The institution does not meet standards for institutional accreditation and cannot reasonably be expected to meet those standards within two years.

Types of Accreditation

There are two main types of accreditation for higher education (The Higher Learning Commission, 2003). One is Institutional Accreditation: An institutional accrediting body evaluates an entire organization and accredits it as a whole. The other is Specialized Accreditation: Specialized (or program) accreditation agencies evaluate particular units, schools, or programs within an organization.

The Criteria of Accreditation

A key to successful accreditation is “the effectiveness and clarity of the standards and criteria for accreditation. They need to be comprehensive so that they are a reasonable measure of the quality of an institution, and clear so that both the universities and those who carry out reviews understand what is expected of them” (Hayward, 2006, p. 5).

While the criteria of accreditation differ somewhat from one country to another (see Table 1), they are in fact remarkably similar in many respects. All of the examples include an assessment of the mission, governance, teaching, faculty, infrastructure, student services, finances, and planning capacity of institutions in the USA, UK, and Egypt.

Table 1
Higher Education Accreditation among the Countries of USA, UK and Egypt

	USA	UK	Egypt
Mission	Accreditation in the US plays a significant role in fostering public confidence in the educational enterprise, in maintaining standards, in enhancing institutional effectiveness, and in improving higher education. It provides the basis on which institutions can be assured that the accredited institution has complied with a common set of requirements and standards (Koenig, Lofstad & Staab, 2004)	The mission of Quality Assurance for UK Higher Education is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of Higher Education HE (QAA, 2005)	The mission of Quality Assurance in Egypt is "To ensure quality, continuous development and efficient performance of Egyptian education institutions, and to gain the community confidence in their products, depending on distinguished and competent human resources, and based on internationally recognized evaluation mechanisms" (Said, 2007).
History	Accreditation in the United States is more than 100 years old, emerging from concerns to protect public health and safety and to serve the public interest (Eaton, 2006a).	Throughout the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century's, fledgling universities acquired their sense of standards under the tutelage of established institutions (Hebron, 1996). In 1997 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was formed to rationalize the external quality assurance of UK higher education (QAA, 2005).	The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Project (QAAP) was chosen as one of the six priority projects to be implemented in the period 2002-2007 through a loan agreement between the Government and the World Bank (QAAP, 2004). In 2007, The National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) was created to work on developing Quality Assurance and Accreditation Standards for Education in Egypt.

	USA	UK	Egypt (NAQAAE, History)
Governance	<p>Accreditation in US is not a government activity. It is extended largely through nongovernmental, voluntary associations (NWCCU, 2003). Accreditation is governed by commonly-developed and -accepted “standards of good practice”, not by law. But laws can and do effect the way standards are developed and reinforced (Koenig, Lofstad & Staab, 2004).</p>	<p>In UK, the responsibility for internal quality assurance is conducted by universities (Dill, 2007). QAA is independent of UK governments and is owned by the organizations that represent the heads of UK universities and colleges (Universities UK, Universities Scotland, Higher Education Wales and the Standing Conference of Principals) (QAA, 2005).</p>	<p>The NAQAAE is an independent body, affiliated to the cabinet and reporting directly to the President of Egypt, Parliament and to the Prime Minister (Badrawi, 2006). Its Committee is composed of (15) members representing (15) state universities, (9) members representing (NGOs), private universities, stakeholders, Supreme Council of Universities and other experts in quality assurance. (MOHE, 2007a).</p>
The operation of accreditation	<p>The accreditation process goes through the following number of steps (Eaton, 2006b):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-study. Institutions and programs prepare a written summary of performance, based on accrediting organizations’ standards. ▪ Peer review: Accreditation review is conducted primarily by faculty and administrative peers in the profession. These colleagues review the self-study and serve on visiting teams that review institutions and programs after the self study is completed. ▪ Site visit: Accrediting organizations normally send a visiting team to review an institution or program. The self-study provides the foundation for the team visit. ▪ Judgment by accrediting organization: Accrediting organizations have decision-making bodies (commissions) made up of administrators and faculty from institutions and programs as well as public members. These commissions may affirm accreditation for new institutions and programs, reaffirm accreditation for ongoing institutions and programs and deny accreditation to institutions and programs. 	<p>The audit process goes through the following steps (QAA, 2002):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Audit visit minus not less than 28 weeks: QAA's Information Unit (IU) provides the QAA Assistant Director (AD) with a summary of the institution's Teaching Quality Information (TQI) set and a commentary which will be sent to the institution. 2- Audit visit minus not less than 24 weeks = preliminary meeting: AD visits institution to meet institutional representatives and students. AD provides briefing on the process of audit and provides guidance on the institution's briefing paper and the student submission. 3- Audit visit minus 10 weeks: QAA receives the institutional briefing paper. QAA receives the students' written submission if applicable. 4- Audit visit minus five weeks = briefing visit: Audit team and AD undertake the briefing visit to the institution. Audit team holds a meeting with the head of the institution, senior staff of the institution and student representatives. 5- Audit visit: Audit team visits the institution for up to 	<p>The accreditation process goes through several steps (Badrawi, 2008):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preliminary survey visit: The institution has the right to request a survey visit of the agency to determine and analyze the readiness of the institution to apply for accreditation. ▪ Application for the accreditation process after approval of the university and Minister of Higher Education. ▪ Approval of application by NAQAAE to be sent to institution within 30 days of application. ▪ A self evaluation report provided by the institutions based on the standards of institutional and educational capacity set by NAQAAE. ▪ An onsite visit is conducted either by NAQAAE itself by approved individuals from NGOs certified by the agency to perform the visit. ▪ A recommendation of the team is sent to NAQAAE and is approved by the Board of Directors. ▪ Accreditation decisions are informed to the institutions, university and to the Minister of Higher Education. ▪ NAQAAE performs the regular monitoring of the accredited institution and

	USA	UK	Egypt
	<p>▪ Periodic external review: Institutions and programs continue to be reviewed over time. They normally prepare a self-study and undergo a site visit each time.</p>	<p>five working days. 6- Audit visit plus two weeks: Letter outlining the audit findings is agreed by the audit team and sent to the head of the institution. 7- Audit visit plus eight weeks: QAA sends the draft report to institution. 8- Audit visit plus 12 weeks: Institution responds to the report. 9- Audit visit plus 20 weeks: Report is published on the web.</p>	<p>retains the right to revoke the accreditation status if the institution fails to maintain all standards set by the agency. The Minister of Higher Education is informed of such decisions and they can be appealed by the institution.</p>
Accrediting bodies	<p>There are four types of accrediting organizations in US (Eaton, 2006b):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional accreditors: there are six Regional accreditors which accredit public and private, mainly nonprofit and degree-granting, two- and four-year institutions. • Faith-based accreditors: they mainly accredit religiously affiliated and doctrinally based institutions, mainly nonprofit and degree-granting. • Private career accreditors: they accredit mainly for-profit, career-based, single purpose institutions, both degree and non-degree. <p>Programmatic accreditors: There are sixty-two programmatic accreditors in US which accredit specific programs, professions and free-standing schools.</p>	<p>Some UK universities act as a validating body to non-degree awarding institutions. The QAA was formed in 1997 to rationalize the external quality assurance of UK Higher Education. (QAA, 2005).</p> <p>There are other agencies that conduct accreditation such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The British Accreditation Council (BAC), established as an independent body in 1984 to improve and enhance the standards of independent further and higher educational institutions (BAC, 2007) • Open University Validation Services OUVS, established within the Open University in 1992 to offer validation services to academic & professional bodies, companies and other organizations without awarding powers (OUVS, 2007). 	<p>The National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) is an Independent Agency attached to Prime Minister; it was created under a Presidential decree in 2007, it is working on developing Quality Assurance and Accreditation Standards for various types of Education (Helal, 2008)</p> <p>The Agency has succeeded in establishing centers for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in almost all the Egyptian universities.</p>
Recognition	<p>Two organizations review accreditation bodies and approve them (Koenig, Lofstad & Staab, 2004).</p> <p>1- U.S. Department of Education (USDOE): a branch of the U.S. government that is responsible for supervising federal programs and distributing federal funding education.</p> <p>2- Council for Higher Education Accreditation</p>	<p>QAA is an independent body, it is not covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), but it is committed to meeting its standards of openness and accountability. All requests for information will be dealt with in the spirit of the FOIA so far as is reasonable and practical (QAA, QAA Information, n.d.)</p> <p>QAA reports annually to the Higher Education Funding</p>	<p>According to the law of establishing The National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) in Egypt, the agency shall be obliged to provide an annual report about its outcomes and recommendations to (Presidential Decree, 2007): the President of the Country, the Speaker of the People's Assembly; and the Prime Minister.</p>

	USA	UK	Egypt
	(CHEA): a non-governmental, private, non-profit organization for HEIs in the US.	Council for England (HEFCE) & for Wales (HEFCW) on activities to assure the quality of higher education in England and Wales.	
Basis of Evaluation	<p>Each accrediting organization in US defines its own standards, based on the state of the higher education community and government activities through the Higher Education Act. The following standards for accreditation are common to all US regional accreditors (Koenig, Lofstad & Staab (2004), an institution must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a stated mission and purpose that are appropriate to higher education. • Have stated goals that are based on the institutional mission. • Have clearly-defined, functioning systems and resources – fiscal, organizational, and academic - that support the mission and goals and enable them to be realized. • Have a system of continuous evaluation of progress toward the status mission and goals, and of planning for future progress. 	<p>UK Universities are autonomous, self-governing institutions. Each is responsible for the standards and quality of its academic awards and programs. In particular, institutions address their responsibilities for standards and quality through (QAA, 2003):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the assessment of students; ▪ Their procedures for the design, approval, monitoring and review of programs. <p>QAA carries out external quality assurance by judging how reliably the universities and colleges fulfill their responsibility. It also encourages institutions to keep improving the management of their standards and quality. The assessment process considers six aspects of the learning experience and its outcome (Petersen, 1999):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. curriculum design and organization; 2. teaching, learning, and assessment; 3. student progression and achievement; 4. student support and guidance; 5. learning resources; and 6. Quality management and enhancement. 	<p>The framework for evaluation, given below, is designed to be sufficiently flexible to serve all institutions that have developmental engagements (MOHE, 2007b):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic Standards, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended learning outcomes. • Curricula. • Student assessment. • Student achievement. 2. Quality of Learning Opportunities, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning. • Student support. • Learning resources. 3. Research and Other Scholarly Activity, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of plans and the scale of activity • Distinguishing features • How the activities relate to the other academic activities in the institution 4. Community Involvement, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contribution it makes • The range of activities, and how it relates to the institution's mission • Examples of effective practice 5. The Effectiveness of Quality Management and Enhancement, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and leadership • Quality assurance systems
The significance of accreditation	<p>Accreditation is a means of protecting: (Koenig, Lofstad & Staab, 2004):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting employers from substandard employees; • protecting students from substandard competitors for admission or jobs, and from entering substandard institutions; 	<p>QAA works in partnership with the HE providers and funders, staff and students, employers and other stakeholders, to (QAA, Our Purposes, n.d.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard the student and wider public interest in the maintenance of standards of academic awards and the quality of HE. 	<p>The Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Egypt can be seen as (Badrawi, 2006):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A gateway towards total quality assurance in the Egyptian education • A tool to improve the quality and relevance of Education in Egypt

	USA	UK	Egypt
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting institutions from substandard applicants, and from entering into cooperation with substandard institutions; • protecting providers of grants/loans by preventing students from spending taxpayers' money on substandard institutions or study programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate information on academic standards and quality to inform student choice and employers' understanding, and to underpin public policy-making. • Enhance the assurance and management of standards and quality in HE. • Promote the understanding of the standards and quality in HE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A motivation for institutions to promote comprehensive educational processes and quality systems • A method to raise the level of confidence in the educational institutions and their graduates
Fund resources	<p>Accreditation organizations in USA are funded by (Eaton, 2006a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual dues from institutions and programs that are accredited. • Fees that institutions and programs pay for accreditation visits. • In some instances, financial assistance from sponsoring organizations. • Accrediting organizations sometimes obtain funds for special initiatives from government or from private foundations. 	<p>The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is funded by (Willing, 2008):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contracts with the higher education funding councils (Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Department for Employment and Learning, Higher Education Funding Council for England), • subscriptions from higher education institutions, • And self-funding activities and contracts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The law assigned the financial resources for NQAAA as follows (Presidential Decree, 2007): • The state appropriations in the first five years of activity unless otherwise necessitated. • Fees for the provided services and consultation by the agency. • Fees for issuing the accreditation certificates to the educational institutions. • Grants, donations, bonuses, testaments and subsidies approved and accepted by the board of directors. • The revenue the agency invested capital.

Conclusion

Countries wishing to move towards the knowledge economy are challenged to undertake reforms to raise the quality of education and training through changes in content and pedagogy. Recent studies have demonstrated that for developing countries, higher education can play a key role in accelerating the rate of growth towards a country's productivity potential (Materu, 2007). Accreditation is considered as one of several complementary measures in a quality assurance system, which works to maintain and improve good quality in institutions of higher education.

In recent years, quality assurance in higher education has become a rising concern for policymakers, educators and general public. Students, parents, employers and even ordinary citizens increasingly seek affirmation that colleges and universities are preparing students to possess the skills and competency required for an increasingly knowledge-driven, global economy (Alam, 2006).

With an accredited institution, a student has some assurance of receiving a quality education and gaining recognition by other colleges and by employers of the course credits and degrees earned. Accreditation is an affirmation that a college provides a quality of education that the general public has the right to expect and that the educational community recognizes (MHEC, The Importance of Accreditation, 2008).

The frameworks for external quality assurance varied from country to country, but had generally followed three modal forms: the European model of central control of quality assurance by state educational ministries, the US model of decentralized quality assurance combining limited state control with market competition, and the British model in which the state essentially ceded responsibility for quality assurance to self-accrediting universities (Shimizu, 2000).

The difference between the American and the British Model is that the American model is primarily for accreditation and its main purpose is to determine whether an institution is worthy of continued operation as an educational entity. On the other hand, the assessment of teaching and research in the UK involves relative evaluation among participating institutions, and often results are used for quality improvement and linked with funding capabilities by both governmental as well as private foundations. An audit in the UK means external scrutiny aimed at providing guarantees that institutions have suitable quality control mechanisms in place. It is a form of meta-evaluation (Shimizu, 2000).

In the UK, up until the actions by the Thatcher government in 1981, the assurance of academic quality in the publicly supported university sector was delegated to the academic profession itself, which monitored and assured the standard of university degrees through collective mechanisms such as the external examiner system. In contrast, ministries of education on the Europe continent were much more active in setting standards for universities. They established and monitored regulations on university admissions, academic appointments, program curricula, and end-point examinations (Dill, 2007).

In the US, as higher education rapidly expanded following World War II, the federal Congress explicitly adopted a market-based approach to academic quality assurance as a supplement to the existing tradition of state licensing and voluntary institutional as well as program accreditation. During the 1972 re-authorization of the Higher Education Act members of Congress argued that providing federal financial assistance directly to students rather than to institutions was the most efficient and effective means to both equalize opportunities in higher education and harness market forces for enhancing academic quality (Dill, 2007).

Institutional accreditation or re-accreditation, in Europe for example, is usually undertaken by national bodies, either government departments or government-initiated agencies that make formal judgments on recognition. Whereas, in the United States, with a large private sector, accreditation is a self-regulatory process of recognition of institutional viability by non-governmental voluntary associations. However, despite the voluntary nature of the process, there has been a funding link through eligibility for federal aid (Dill, 2007).

In Egypt, accreditation is usually undertaken by a national body- The National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) – and Centers for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Egyptian universities. The effect of centralization and governmental control in the process of quality assurance can be noticed obviously in the Egyptian Model, as the agency NAQAAE, responsible for conducting the accreditation process, was established under the Presidential Decree, and is affiliated to the cabinet and reporting directly to the President of Egypt, Parliament and to the Prime Minister. Therefore, institutional accreditation in Egypt is a governmental process, not voluntary process.

Thus, the Egyptian Model of Accreditation is far away from the US Model, in which Accreditation is a voluntary process, and near from the European Model, in which the quality assurance process is controlled by state educational ministries. The British Model came to lie between these two models (centralization model and decentralization model), as the UK universities take the responsibility of the internal quality assurance, and the QAA – a national body- undertakes the external quality assurance.

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