



Experiences of Personnel in Accreditations in Higher Educational Institution: Concerns and Actions

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author RMG was the main proponents of the study. He designed the proposal, gathered the information needed, conducted data analysis, and formulated the conclusion. Author AEF reviewed the entire paper and served as the adviser of author RMG. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/AJESS/2021/v16i130391

Editor(s):

(1) Dr. Ana Sofia Pedrosa Gomes dos Santos, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal.

Reviewers:

(1) Yangjie Huang, Wenzhou Medical University, China.

(2) Yonatan Solomon, Dire Dawa University Ethiopia.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/66173>

Original Research Article

Received 12 January 2021

Accepted 15 March 2021

Published 24 March 2021

ABSTRACT

Aims: To determine the experiences of the participants who were involved in the accreditation process

Study Design: Qualitative-phenomenology

Place and Duration of Study: Southern Philippines Agribusiness and Marine and Aquatic School of Technology for five months.

Methodology: The participants were 12 program area leaders, and Internal Assessment Board in-charge. They were grouped into four and interviewed using the validated interview guide questionnaire.

Results: Themes which concern emotional issues themes were: utilizing archive, enjoying unintended outcome, negotiating time availability, and dealing with inconveniences. Moreover, emerging themes describing the problems encountered in the 10 areas of accreditation included: lack of support, difficulties in documents preparation, utilized personal resources, undefined and unclear dissemination of tasks. Finally, themes for solutions conducted were: necessity of training

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and workshop, provision of matrix of activity, familiarity of the different tools and program offerings, and establish monitoring team.

Conclusion: Preparations are the key to accreditations. The preparation processes should not start months before the scheduled accreditation visit rather right after the commencement of the previous visit. Qualified persons who are knowledgeable on accreditation processes should be. Higher education administration should observed due diligence.

Recommendation: College's Quality Assurance (QA) individuals may be trained to become knowledgeable on the processes of accreditation; preparations for accreditation may be done way ahead of the scheduled visit; area leaders may manage their time in the preparation of documents to avoid discrepancies during accreditation; reorganization of area leaders may be prevented to avoid unfamiliarity of tasks; budget for accreditation processes may be provided; appropriate incentives may be given for those who work overtime; the principle of "Every day is an Accreditation Day" may be observed in order to cultivate among the staff of the college the essence of accreditation. Lastly, creation of College Accreditation Coordinating Council may be created to oversee the processes of accreditation and serve as the focal point for strategic planning.

Keywords: Accreditation; experiences; qualitative; public administration.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education accreditation is a jumble of events, procedures, and systems that is fragmented, arcane, and more historical than logical, and has outlived its utility [1]. Its processes are tedious and always involve tons of work [2]. Likewise, accreditation is expensive to acquire and maintain [3]. Ironically, accreditations' findings are ignored [4].

Educational accreditation has evolved significantly over the past three decades. Its development impacted largely higher education institutions [5]. Through accreditation, educational institutions are ensured of international standards [6] guided to obtain accurate education planning needs to be developed [7] promoted innovation and creativity among academic programs Van Ginkel & Rodrigues-Diaz [8]; contributed more to the development of processes and practices in institution in its operation Ulket & Bakioglu [9] and strong motivation for self-improvement [10].

In the Philippines, the accreditation of curricular programs focuses on teaching and study efficiency, student support, community relations and resource management [11]. Accreditation of state universities and colleges is a particular mandate of the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP), Inc. This accrediting agency viewed that accreditation is a process by which an institution, at the tertiary level, evaluates its educational activities, in whole or in part seeks an independent judgment to confirm that it

substantially achieves its objectives, and is generally equal in quality to comparable institutions [12]. Conchada and Tiongco [13] mentioned that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a vital role in preparing a country to be globally competitive through the skilled human capital resources it produces. The task is daunting as the institution has to constantly check itself against the standards in place and keep itself abreast of the latest demands of the labor market. This involves investing in a considerable amount of resources to develop its faculty, research, and facilities.

In the case of the Southern Philippines Agribusiness and Marine and Aquatic School of Technology (SPAMAST) where this study was conducted, strengthening its basic functions, has pursued its mandate for quality and excellence, and embraces the philosophy and practice of voluntary assessment and evaluation of academic programs through accreditation. In 2001, SPAMAST upholds the standard of accreditation by meeting acceptable levels of quality and excellence. In 2003, the fisheries program attained its first level accreditation with AACCUP and in 2005, the Secondary Teacher Education program from College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Marine Sciences and College of Agricultural Science obtained similar levels. SPAMAST is committed itself to provide quality education responsive to the changing times. Anchored on that covenant, the college continues to develop innovative strategies to strengthen its academic programs and make them relevant to the needs and demands of the present and future generations. This

commitment is reflective of the College vision. At present, 18 programs in both campuses are accredited: three were awarded Level II Re – accredited Status (Qualified for Level III), five were awarded Level II Re – Accredited Status, 10 were awarded Level I Accredited Status, and one program is on candidate status.

According to Arceo [14] attitude, financing and common standard, slow process, integrity of the process and confidentiality of records and other documents are the common problems and issues of accreditation. Lessons learned from accreditation can be used as a tool to identify the weaknesses and to enhance quality education towards the challenges of globalization. It is for this reason that the researchers embarked this study on the experiences of the participants in the AACUP Program Accreditation. Identifying the participant's experiences during accreditation would be an initial step to examine the weaknesses and strengths of SPAMAST in relation to programs' accreditation. If these would emerge as good points for accreditation, the institution as a whole would further cherish and continue to provide quality education.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The general aim of this study was to explore the participants' first-hand accounts on program accreditation. Specifically, it sought:

1. To determine the experiences of the participants involved in the accreditation process conducted by the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACUP);
2. To identify the common problems encountered by the participants in the ten (10) areas of accreditation; and
3. To determine possible solutions of the problems encountered by the participants in the 10 areas of accreditation.

1.2 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study was limited only to determining the varied experiences in the AACUP accreditation of SPAMAST. It was focused on the participants' experiences; problems encountered; and suggested solutions during accreditation. This study did not include other accreditation like ISO, Center of Development (COD), Center of Excellence, etc. Thus, due to this limitation, San Jose [15] mentioned that findings could not be generalized. The findings were only true to the participants of the study. However, implications

could be gained from the results of the study which may be basis for further studies.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS / EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS / METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study used the qualitative-phenomenological method. San Jose [15] mentioned that qualitative method is usually used when an investigator aims to explore and discover personal insights and understanding" of the individual involved. Qualitative method aims not to determine individuals' level of satisfaction [16] rather to cull the persons' meaningful experiences [17]. In the context of this study, the participants' first-hand encounter were captured and understood. On the other hand, phenomenology method is used to understand the experiences of individuals who experienced the situation [18] it is also used to explore the subjectivity, lived, contextual, and temporal encounter with the phenomenon [19].

In this study, the accreditation of the higher educational institution was considered as the phenomenon because it is a specific situation which affected not only the entire institution but also involved the staff. Qutoshi [20] considered phenomenon as a perceived condition which needs higher level of human cognition while Sundler et al. [21] mentioned that a phenomenon is something encountered by individuals.

2.2 Data Analysis

Narrative analysis was used for the interpretation of the study. According to Esin et al. [22], narrative analysis is the fundamental, indefinite, and general diverse theoretical perspectives, numerous approaches, depending on discipline, purpose and aim. In this study, the researchers presented the results by intertwining the participants' experiences based on the obtained information. Hence, the verbatim transcriptions were indicated in the presentation of results.

2.3 Research Participants

The 12 participants of this study were the program area leaders, and Internal Assessment Board (IAB) in-charge who were involved in the accreditation. They were purposely chosen. Other college staff who had no involvement in the accreditation were not selected. They were grouped into four focus groups.

2.4 Research Instrument

The researchers used the validate-interview guide questionnaire to obtain the essential information. The instrument was given to three expert validators for comments and suggestions. At the same time, it was initially conducted to three non-participants individuals. These were done to verify the instrument's external and internal validity. The interview guide was composed of three main questions and eight probe questions.

2.5 Sampling Procedure

In choosing the participants for the study, the researchers used the purposive sampling method. The researcher handpicked the participants based on 1) they were involved in the accreditation; 2) they were staff of the college. Yadav et al., [23] stated that purposive sampling represents a group of different non – probability-sampling techniques. It focused on a particular characteristic of a population that are of interest that enable one to answer research questions. Twelve participants were selected and willingly participated.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedures

In conducting the study, the researchers utilized the following processes: first, secured permission from the Office of the President to conduct the study in the two campuses of SPAMAST: Malita, Davao Occidental and Digos City, Davao del Sur. Second, furnished the different deans of every institute a copy of the approved permission from the School President and a cover letter on the subject of the study in order to solicit support and cooperation. Third, arranged with the deans of every institute the schedule of the researchers' visit to conduct the face-to- face focus group discussions. Two focus groups were interviewed in both campuses. Each focus group had three members.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In coming up with the themes of this study, researcher focused only on important clauses and phrases that emerged from the transcripts. These were utilized and made into thematic statements. They were listed and grouped accordingly to determine patterns and connections between themes. The process of numeration was adopted in determining the

thematic statements. According to Guest et al., [24], numeration referred to the number of times that thematic statements or emergent themes occurred in the transcripts. In this study, themes were notified when at least two participants in a group highlighted a particular idea or experience. Those that occurred only once were not included in the thematic statements.

3.1 Dealing with Emotional Issues

The informants stated that they still experienced pressure despite the number of years they were engaged in the accreditation. They also revealed that they spent long hours in gathering documents which resulted to stress and misunderstanding among their colleagues. This finding corroborated other research findings. Accreditation processes are tedious and always involve tons of work [2]. It would be more difficult if staff and facilities are limited; hence create increased pressure [25]. Likewise, lack of cooperation results to excessive stress to the staff [26]. Worse, because of lots of work are to be done to comply with the necessary documents for accreditation, staffs' quality of work reduces [27].

According to Informant VO105 when asked about her experiences during accreditation, she recalled:

Since the very start, it was always a reminder not to fear accreditation since they are there to help us and not criticize. Along the preparation process, pressure was there. It was inevitable. You were pressured since it is almost near. The papers were not yet arranged thought it is just common stress dealing with papers. (Archive VO105)

In like manner, similar experienced was shared by Informant DD101, when asked the same question,

Maybe, I have improved in my time management since there was a lot of task to do. We multi-task. The only time we give emphasis to it like preparing the timetable, which we have not prepared ahead of time because of the many tasks. Examples are areas of designation and then you are an instructor at the same time, is when the accreditation is near. (Archive DD101).

In addition, Informant VO105 added her thoughts about her experienced during accreditation and her thoughts went like this:

Table 1. Experiences of the Participants during Accreditation

Essential themes	Thematic statement
Dealing with Emotional Issues	<p>Feeling stress with having little time to accomplish tasks.</p> <p>Being anxious for having so little time to prepare the document.</p> <p>Experiencing exhaustion in doing the tasks alone.</p> <p>Feeling burnout in gathering the documents.</p> <p>Being worried when documents are difficult to retrieve.</p> <p>There is pressure felt.</p> <p>Misunderstanding with workmates occurs.</p> <p>There is tension because of misunderstanding.</p>
Utilizing Archive	<p>Other documents were already compiled in the previous accreditation.</p> <p>Important documents were already accessible from the previous accreditation.</p> <p>Some documents are easily available from the files kept.</p> <p>Other staff share documents from past accreditation.</p>
Enjoying Unintended Outcome	<p>Feeling joyful to accomplish the tasks at hand.</p> <p>Learning new things from others.</p> <p>Developing good collaboration skills while working.</p> <p>Work relationship is strengthened.</p> <p>Develop sense of pride for the success of the accreditation.</p>
Negotiating Time Availability	<p>Learning to accomplish tasks in short period.</p> <p>Overlapping tasks to perform in short time.</p> <p>Sacrificing other tasks in favor of the accreditation.</p> <p>Difficulty in adjusting the available time to work and conduct classes.</p> <p>There is only too short period to prepare the documents.</p>
Dealing with Inconveniences	<p>Leaving school at late night.</p> <p>Bearing the inconvenience of waiting long time for vehicles to arrive at late night.</p> <p>There was no service credit provided for work done on weekends.</p> <p>No available vehicles for transportation.</p> <p>Much time is wasted because there is no particular person in-charge for some tasks.</p> <p>There is difficulty in managing time because classes should be conducted and documents should be gathered.</p>

Your professional relationship with your workmates is affected as well like the teamwork's flow, when instead we are working for the common good of everyone and the school. I have to understand that pressure is but natural with limited time set to prepare. (Archive VO105).

3.2 Utilizing Archive

The informants confessed that some of the documents in the preparation for accreditation were already compiled, shared and accessible because of the previous accreditation. According to Dua and Lapod [28] and Naufalin et al., [29] reliable archival system helps in providing organized and systematic documents and data retrieval. Thus, hasten the compliance.

According to Informant AC107 when asked about his experiences during accreditation, he recalled: *It was also my first time to handle the faculty area. Good thing, there were existing previous documents that I can use but I also need to analyze it though. (Archive AC107).*

Similarly, Informant AA104 shared his insights when asked with the same question and politely responded:

I am from area 1, VMGO, and previously I was the area leader of the physical plant, which I liked the most. Suddenly, change occurred. I was relocated to area 1. It was strange to me. I felt awkward. So the result, I gathered all previous documents. Then on the second accreditation, last time, since I already had an experience. Like what ma'am Maymay stated, work became handier since we already had the documents. (Archive104).

Further, Informant DP103 also shared her thoughts about her experiences during accreditation and she shared that:

Actually, I had twice experienced preparing documents wherein the said accreditation is a week away. What I learned from the experiences was that I was being lax because I knew the documents were always available. The problem was the documents we had been of the undergraduate and the graduate school was the focus of the accreditation and we did not have lots of documents to present. (Archive DP103).

3.3 Enjoying Unintended Outcomes

This theme speaks of the positive outcomes such as developing sense of pride; work relationship was strengthened, learning new things from

others and the feeling of joyfulness in accomplishing the tasks. Usually according to Dealtry [30] staff involved in accreditation gained personal development and high level of competency. Moreover, Schmidt and Hensley [31] mentioned staff involved in the accreditation process become experts and can educate others whom they interact with. Thus, develops the sense of pride. Further, Ferreira et al. [32] affirmed that besides gaining organizational credibility, accreditation generates sense of pride to all staff of the institution.

Informant AB108 when asked what experiences she encountered during accreditation, Informant AB108 revealed that:

In general, I can say that it is a positive one since I learned from it. The bottom line is you are learning especially, that it is a new endeavor. You will be happy if you learned from it. (Archive AB108).

Meanwhile, Informant RO110 also shared her sentiment, she explained that:

Time is not enough so, I will sum this all up. I learned a lot, since it is my first time to be an area leader. Before I was just a support staff/secretariat. (Archive RO110).

Further, Informant MV100 also shared his thoughts about his experiences during accreditation and he shared that:

In my part, since it is my first time joining an accreditation, as a team leader, during my preparation, I encountered problems like preparing the documents because I did not have any idea about it. I needed to undergo an orientation and so it took me time. We had an IAB and I was shy to present because my documents were lacking. My God! I just did not know what documents should be put. Therefore, that was it, but as time goes by, I learned all about it due to someone helping me. Then, during the accreditation in our area, it was all good because they did not look for our documents, as if nothing's lacking. Unlike the other accreditors who were looking on our area. This one actually told us to remove three (3) pages because it seemed too much. (Archive MV100).

3.4 Negotiating Time Availability

Under this essential theme, the availability of time for the tasks is at stake. Setting priorities is

the paramount consideration in this part wherein the employees will have to adjust or manage their time for accreditation and to the other tasks. One of the issues of availability of time is the sacrificing other tasks in favor of the accreditation and the difficulty of adjusting the time during accreditation. Another is the sacrificing the conduct of classes and the short period to prepare the documents needed for accreditation. Rashid [33] opined that aside from appropriate resources such as manpower and equipment, availability of time in the preparation of documents should be ensured. Hakim et al., [34] made mentioned that staff who have key involvement in the accreditation process need allot special time because as Blouin and Tekian [35] and Mejía-Aguilar et al., [36] pointed out, accreditation is burdensome and time consuming.

Even in his years of participation with accreditation as area leader, Informant TR109 confessed that he suffered difficulties in adjusting the available time to work and conduct classes in relation to accreditation experiences. He said:

Anyway, I am not that busy since I only have two parameters but you have classes with five presentation. Then you will be affected. What actually happened was I only conducted one quiz in one semester. (Archive TR109).

Meanwhile, Informant DD101 admitted that her years as area leaders do not guarantee of proper time management in dealing with academic task and accreditation as experience. She declared:

Maybe another reason for unpreparedness is the many designations, dual tasks that led to multitasking and now. We are working the present, and this will be our priority. Same with me, I am the LET coordinator. I am prioritizing it more since it is already a review time. Instead of putting the accreditation first and that is how it works. You are a coordinator, instructor, SODO coordinator and many of it, and it is only a unload of three (3) unit, sir. (Archive DD101).

In support to the above statement, Informant AB108 admitted that:

I found it hard to answer questions regarding reports that were not made by me. You actually need many reports from other people, though I worked on it from the very start. I still do have my priorities, it is not my only tasks, and I still have other things to do too. (Archive AB108).

3.5 Dealing with Inconveniences

This theme refers to the problems that cause troubles for the informants during accreditation. Inconveniences included leaving school at night, no availability of vehicles for transportation and no service credit provided for work done on weekends or overtime works. The inconveniences provided by the participants were within their context. It could be noted that the SPAMAST Digos campus is located six kilometers from the city proper while the main campus is two kilometers. The only means of transportation is tricycles which do not travel in 24-hour basis. These findings imply that there was somehow lack of support for staff. Sharifi et al., [26] said that lack of cooperation results to excessive stress to the staff.

According to Informant LD103, she has been longing to have vehicles at night that they can use. She shared:

Before, during the time of Sir Campaner, whenever we have overtime, there were foods always, now there is none. Even vehicle that will deliver us to our houses because there are no pedicabs available during that time. Pedicabs are out of sight whenever the clock strikes 11:00 pm. We do not have any allowances. We do not have overtime pay, even service credit, there is none. (Archive LD103).

Meanwhile, Informant RS106 also shared his sentiments about the lack of vehicles for transportation. Even he has no difficulty or inconvenience of waiting long time for vehicles to arrive at night, but he feels the sentiments of other area leaders and staff. He revealed that:

So, we'll work beyond 5:00 pm or 8:00 pm. Now the problem is transportation. There are no vehicles available in the evening. I was lucky before since I have my own vehicle and considered it a win-win situation because during accreditation, I had someone to do it. Generally, during documents preparation, I had nothing to do it since I have people working for me. (Archive RS106).

In order to have a convenient and comfortable service to the area leader at night, the administration should be able to provide vehicles for those who undertake overtime in relation to accreditation. Informant TR109 noted that it would be beneficial for the area leaders to be provided with vehicles at night. He also added that:

The administration is aware that the faculty/J.O. was doing overtime even if they were not area leaders. The J.O. people looked pitiful, they didn't even have coffee, transport vehicle, so they settled themselves walking from school to the along the highways of the school until they see pedicabs on the road. There should be support from the administration since they are doing this for the accreditation. Majority of area leaders' works were tended by the J.O. people. (Archive TR109).

3.5.1 Problems encountered in the 10 areas during accreditation

A number of essential themes were drawn out from the focus group discussion. The responses from the interview mainly revolved on the research question on the problems encountered in the 10 areas during accreditation. The informants were asked to expose the problems encountered in the 10 areas during accreditation. They also shared the reasons why they encountered those problems. All the essential themes and thematic statements are further presented in Table 2.

3.6 Lack of Support

The participants also stressed out that they encountered lack of budgets for printing of documents needed for the accreditation. Also, the printers and school supplies were not available. No monetary assistance for school supplies. Another problem encountered is the lack of empathy on the part of the administration. Yousefinezhadi et al., [37] and Yousefinezhadi et al., [38] averred that it should be clear to the educational institution that infrastructure for accreditation must be provided such as sufficient funds, enough human resources, and equipment. Ikram et al., [39] implied that administrative support to accreditation is of utmost relevance.

In the interview, Informant DD101 was asked on the problem she encountered in her areas of assignment during accreditation. Informant DD101 shared that:

Lack of support in terms of materials needed. We do have materials here but these are not intended for the accreditation. This is for instruction purposes but we still used it anyway and now we are facing the problem now since we already have nothing to use anymore. Struggle was really real. The photocopier was defective and printers were out of ink. (Archive DD101).

Meanwhile, Informant LD103 shared the she used her own equipment in order to finished accreditation related work. She believed that using her own money would help her to cope up the task. She shared that:

Cash out from our pocket sir. We bring our own printer and buy ink. Like what happened to the accreditation of the MAED program, since most of the area leaders were from the education department, the entire intended supplies for the department for one year were used. (Archive LD 103).

Moreover, Informant AC107 was asked about the problems he encountered during accreditation. He straightly said that:

I became a loyalist of National Bookstore; I bought supplies from them and all other things that I can use for the accreditation. (Archive AC107).

3.6.1 Experience troubles in documents preparation

Informants stressed that they encountered difficulties in the retrieval of reports. More so, informant's expresses that there are documents that are not available resorting to fabrication, manufacture of documents. Although it was mentioned in the earlier theme that some documents were easily retrieved because those were archived from the previous accreditation, this time, staff fabricated unavailable documents through the "work-back" concept. Thus, preparation of necessary papers became tedious. Although fabrication according to Yousefinezhadi et al., [38] concerns ethical issue, Liu et al., [40] argue that fabrication happens due to the staffs' unfamiliarity of the processes of accreditation.

Informant LD103 shared during the interview, that many are good magicians. She added that:

There was no actual transparency. Only those who were involved in the construction knew where the administration room was, and that was not actually an academic building but a research facility. But it was transformed as an academic building at the moment for compliance. To have a better picture for documentation, because you will later explain that the rooms are conducive for learning. At the end of the day, you created "magic". (Archive LD103).

Table 2. Problems encountered in the 10 Areas during accreditation

Essential themes	Thematic statement
Lack of Support	<p>There is no budget given for printing of documents.</p> <p>The printers were not available.</p> <p>We were not given school supply like bond paper.</p> <p>No monetary assistance given to buy supplies.</p> <p>Less cooperation from staff.</p> <p>Refusal to accept responsibility among the staff.</p> <p>The administration lacks feeling of empathy to teachers who are part of the accreditation.</p> <p>The administration does not provide support like. transportation or even food during overtime work.</p>
Experiencing Trouble in Document Preparation	<p>Difficulty in arranging documents.</p> <p>Having short time to revise papers.</p> <p>Taking time to finalize documents.</p> <p>Dealing with unfamiliar documents.</p> <p>Having difficulty understanding reports submitted.</p> <p>There are overlapping tasks in gathering documents.</p> <p>Difficulty in understanding the reports made by others.</p> <p>Confuse how to begin the documentation.</p> <p>Unable to find the required documents.</p> <p>Difficulty in the retrieval of reports.</p> <p>Resorting to fabricating the required documents.</p> <p>Do not know to whom the required documents will be asked for.</p> <p>Finding no one to help in gathering documents.</p> <p>Only few people work for many tasks.</p> <p>No available printer and school supply.</p> <p>Manufacture documents that are not available.</p>
Utilizing Personal Resources	<p>Personal money is used for printing.</p> <p>Buying own bond paper for printing the documents.</p> <p>Using own printers at home.</p> <p>Bringing curtains from home to school to decorate rooms.</p>
Tasks are Undefined and Unclearly Disseminated	<p>Not well-informed about the documents to be done.</p> <p>Some tasks were not clearly explained who will work for it like tabbing of documents.</p> <p>The staff does not know clear assignment.</p> <p>Many staffs do not know whom to approach in gathering the documents.</p>

Informant TR109 also shared his encountered problems during accreditation. He declared that:

There were no available documents. You have to fabricate it, which is the correct term. Ask Sir Galvez about it. If in case there is lacked documents, when you ask the person held liable for it, then they too do not have documents. You resort to fabricating it. (Archive TR10).

Furthermore, another Informant AB108 said:

I found it hard to answer questions regarding reports that were not made by me. You actually need many reports from other people. Though I worked on it from the very start. (Archive AB108).

3.7 Utilizing Personal Resources

Informants believed that they need to use their personal resources such as printer, foods for the overtime work, buying own bond paper and other resources needed for accreditation. Again, this finding indicated that there was lack of support and planning on the part of the educational institution.

According to Informant DP103, she is using her own materials for beautification of the office because everything is not provided. She said:

If you have an office, you need to bring your personal things like curtains because not everything is provided. Some used their own money, sir. (Archive DP103).

Informant LD 103 thought the same way. For Informant LD103, she had so much experiencing problems like using personal things during accreditation. She noted that:

Cash out from our pocket sir, we bring our own printer and buy ink. Like what happened to the accreditation of the MAED program, since most of the area leaders were from the education department, the entire intended supplies for the department for one year were used. (Archive LD103).

Informant TR109 confirmed that being an area leader you have to use not just school resources but one's personal resources also. He shared that:

I used my personal money sir and did it at home. (Archive TR109).

3.7.1 Tasks are undefined and unclearly disseminated

Informants believed one of the causes of problems arises or encountered during accreditation is due to undefined and unclear tasks wherein most of them were not well informed the documents to be done. Some tasks were not clearly explained who will work for it. Due to the unclear roles and tasks given to the staff, Musa and Uthartianty [41] concluded that preparation process for accreditation may lead to many problems.

According to Informant AB108, she is busy in finding documents and other attachment, but as experienced, she noticed that there is much more complicated to do, making tabbing. She said:

I have similar experience with them sir. I crammed during the accreditation, and I realized it should be QA doing the tabbing of documents. I find tabbing hard and sir is accurate about the repeating stress of accreditation. Tabbing papers is stressing me out. (Archive AB108).

Informant ML111 shared that when it comes to documents preparation, it was difficult. He noted that:

What I find difficult was that I was not aware that we needed to compile thesis documents. I find compendium hard too. (Archive ML111).

Informant DD101 also shared her problem encountered during accreditation. She declared that:

We are not the ones in charge sir. For example in the MAED program, the coordinator must be the one to do the follow up on the needed documents. In an instance, I asked the coordinator for the supply, there is none, and so I went to the dean's office, again there was none. Maybe, he should focus on his tasks and maybe support us as well, because it was never easy to be an area leader. (Archive DD101).

3.8 Solutions Conducted

The FGD provided themes for this question. Informants were asked what are the solutions conducted, and how their experiences help them in understanding the problems. Table 3 pointed out essential themes which were generated from the informant's responses. Research question number three generated five essential themes.

Table 3. Solutions conducted

Essential themes	Thematic statement
The necessity of Training-Workshop	<p>Training will help to orient those who will prepare the documents.</p> <p>Give orientation to teachers on how to deal with the data.</p> <p>The training-workshop will help teachers develop skill in gathering of documents.</p> <p>The workshop will make the work organize and easy.</p> <p>The training will help teachers understand the mechanics of the accreditation.</p> <p>The workshop is beneficial to teachers to be familiar with the process of the accreditation.</p>
Provision of Matrix of Activity	<p>The matrix will guide those who prepare the documents.</p> <p>The submission of the documents can be easy when there is clear timeline provided.</p> <p>The data gathering will be done on time if there is a program of work or matrix of activity.</p> <p>The matrix of activity will help us to have a guide.</p>
Familiarity of the Different Tools and the Program Offerings	<p>The familiarity of the tool will help in easy gathering of documents.</p> <p>The staff should know how to use the tool and be familiar with what it requires.</p> <p>Teachers should be fully aware of the curriculum in every program.</p>
Establish Monitoring Team	<p>There should be one team to monitor the progress in gathering of documents in every area.</p> <p>The team can give proper orientation on how to prepare the documents.</p> <p>The visibility of the team will help in the easy gathering of documents.</p> <p>A team to monitor the progress in the documentation of the data will help address other concern.</p> <p>Monitoring team should be establish to guide in the preparation of documents.</p>
Visibility of Quality Assurance Team	<p>Feeling stress with having little time to accomplish tasks.</p> <p>There is a need to evaluate the documents being prepared.</p> <p>A committee to check the documents will help during the accreditation.</p> <p>A team to quality assure the documents in the phases of data gathering can help us work efficiently.</p> <p>It will help us if there will be people to evaluate our documents during pre-accreditation, during accreditation, and post accreditation phases.</p>

3.9 The Necessity of Training Workshop

Informants emphasized that there should be an orientation, training or a workshop because it would be beneficial to the area leaders to be familiar and to develop skills in gathering document. They also shared that through the training workshop, they can make task more efficient and work organize and easy.

In the interview, Informant DP103 shared her insights about what she noticed differences from the instrument she used too. She said that:

I was shocked because the instrument used before in level 1 is different now. There should be a reorientation even with old employees. We are just repeating our mistakes and it is a waste of paper as well. (Archive103)

Informant LD103 also shared her thoughts that there should be and urgency in conducting orientation. She said:

I saw and felt that there must be an orientation more likely a workshop for the new ones with no experiences on what to do during accreditation. (Archive LD103)

Meanwhile, Informant AC107 also shared his insights similar to the other informants. He stressed that:

In relation to the problem stated a while ago sir, first is the documents. I did not know what particular document I must attach during the exhibit. Workshop should have been conducted prior to the accreditation schedule. (Archive AC107)

Finally, Informant AB108 added her thoughts that:

For me sir, we should not focus on the area leaders since they will come and go, workshop in the administration specifically the offices involved. They should be aware about the parameters which are also assessed by the accreditors and that are what AACCUP wants you to do. I hope that in the future, it will be a routine. For example, there must be a yearly evaluation, there is before but now, I do not know if they are still doing it or not. (Archive AB108)

3.10 Provision of Matrix of Activity

Informants revealed that if there is a clear timeline provided, documents would be

submitted. Informants also empathized that matrix is need because it guided them in the preparation of documents and it would be done on time. Truly Jiang et al., [42] and Silva and Ribeiro [43] agreed that timetables are essential in the monitoring the progress of the preparation. Master [44] also mentioned that timetable is indicative of the realization of the final outputs.

Informant AA104 shared that he was very happy because he learns. He emphasized that:

The most difficult part for me was finding the congruency of the VMG and of the programs. Good thing Dr. Rustom was there. He made the matrix of the CMO. You must base everything on the CMO. I got all he taught me about the congruency for he was an accreditor as well, fortunately he spared his time teaching me. (Archive104)

Meanwhile, AC107 has his thoughts about the importance of matrix in the preparation of documents. He said that:

There should be a matrix, ma'am/sir, right? The responsible person should have a document as well. (Archive AC107)

Moreover, Informant ML111 expressed his thoughts about the target scheduled for accreditation. He manifested that timetable is necessary in the preparation of documents. He confessed that:

More so, for me, we should set a timetable if we want to target the 2018 accreditation. All the things we need to work on, the parameters with its corresponding documents. (Archive ML111).

3.10.1 Familiarity of the different tools and the program offerings

Informants revealed that they get to familiarizes of the tools for better and easy gathering of documents. This finding was the advantage brought by the involvement in the accreditation process of the staff. As Dealthy (2017) mentioned staff involved in accreditation obtained high level of competency; while Schmidt and Hensley [31] said that these staff become experts and can share their knowledge to others.

During the interview, Informant DP103 shared that the orientation must be clear in order to address the varied needs of understanding the tools or instrument use in accreditation. She said:

The orientation is vague sir but I guess the important thing is that everyone is oriented especially in the new instruments and what must be laid. Not everyone had joined it nor had been an accreditor who knew all of it. (Archive DP103)

Informant AB 108 also observed that the office is unaware of the parameters. She shared that:

There is no one at fault, maybe lapses I guess. Maybe the office is unaware of the parameters. (Archive AB108)

Further, Informant AA104 has observed that:

What they said was all right, there were freeloaders, which made the work more difficult. The checklist was hard to understand, so an individual effort was made. (Archive AA104)

3.11 Establish Monitoring Team

Informants affirmed that they established Internal Assessment Board but the question of visibility of the team is quite less. Mushtaq [45] recommended that to inculcate the quest for excellence in education right from the grass root level, it is essential to create awareness of self-accreditation at the school level.

Informant AB 108 confessed that there is a problem in the transition from old office to new office. She said:

That problem should be addressed by the top management, that's why QA exists. For me, it is how the management address the AACUP accreditation problem through creating the QA office and like what they always tell, documents went missing since someone stole the documents. The QA is somehow moved by the top management to address long existing problems of accreditation, but maybe because the office is new, they are still having a hard time managing the area leaders smoothly. Other problem is the transition from the old office to the new QA office. (Archive AB108)

In support to the above statement, Informant RO110 admitted that:

In our part sir, we have coordinators per extension so maybe we can all have a monthly monitoring. To make sure if the programs we have are aligned with what we have and if we in the right phase. We, indeed, are level III and the

programs that we conducted are on the level I, and it's hard to defend it too. The accreditor said, he will fail us, so he instructed me to make proposals supporting the level III programs. If then the I.T. department levels up to III then coordinators must know the programs in level II and III. (Archive RO 110)

3.12 Visibility of Quality Assurance Team

Informants lament that there is a committee to check the documents to assure quality in the phase of data gathering. They also desired in evaluating the documents in the phase of pre, during, and post accreditation phases. This implies that the college's Quality Assurance (QA) needs to intensify its role in the accreditation processes. Thus, the QA team needs to be technically knowledgeable and competent.

According to Informant ML111, he has been in delay in the IAB. He shared:

There was a delay in the IAB, and that started all the hardships. If only I can prepare three or four months prior to the accreditation, maybe I'm done collecting all the necessary documents found in the IAB. In my case, it was given to me one week prior to the event and still. I went lucky because the accreditation is in the research area where I already had an experience. (Archive ML111)

Meanwhile, Informant VO105 also shared her sentiments about the visibility of the QA team and should implement power as showing the motives they have. She revealed that:

Those are the difficulties and problems we encounter but at the end of the day, what matters is how you prepare your documents. Future solution is the QA team should be visible, strong, and should implement power as showing the motives they have. Just like what ma'am said, its existing but it acts like not, the constant clashing and changing of ideas because it new but we stucked with what's given due to time constraint. Maybe it is the transition period. (Archive VO105) Finally, Informant AB108 shared that:

It is given, they were supposedly there to guide and help us, and those were my expectation about their roles in the accreditation. There was more work force this time compared last year, but I did feel ma'am Besas' help more last year than of today's because she was the part of printing the PPI. (Archive AB108)

4. CONCLUSION

Preparations are the key to accreditations. The preparation processes should not start months before the scheduled accreditation visit rather right after the commencement of the previous visit. Qualified persons who are knowledgeable on accreditation processes should be. Due diligence on the part of the higher education administration should be observed.

5. RECOMMENDATION

College's Quality Assurance (QA) individuals may be trained to become knowledgeable on the processes of accreditation; preparations for accreditation may be done way ahead of the scheduled visit; area leaders may manage their time in the preparation of documents to avoid discrepancies during accreditation; reorganization of area leaders may be prevented to avoid unfamiliarity of tasks; budget for accreditation processes may be provided; appropriate incentives may be given for those who work overtime; the principle of "Every day is an Accreditation Day" may be observed in order to cultivate among the staff of the college the essence of accreditation. Lastly, creation of College Accreditation Coordinating Council may be done to oversee the operations and processes of the accreditation and serve as the focal point for the strategic planning for the future accreditation.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical approval is of utmost importance in doing qualitative research. As per international standard or university standard written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s). Since this study involved personal perspectives, the researchers exercised consent, confidentiality, and justice in the conduct of this study. Consent letters were given to the selected participants. Stated in the consent letter were the objectives of the study and the protocols. Torres et al. [46] mentioned that consent gives participants leeway to decide for the study. Consent should indicate that the participants' involvement is voluntary while the protocols ensure that the participants are secured from undue intrusion, distress, indignity, physical discomfort, and embarrassment. Likewise, confidentiality was also stated in the protocols. Hence, the participants asked not to reveal their real names instead codes. On the other hand, justice was observed by giving back the verbatim

transcription to the participants for information verification. They were given time to review the information they had given and a chance to expunge information which they believed unnecessary or too personal. Finally, this study did not involve vulnerable group; hence, it was given low impact vulnerability rating. Necessary protocols were observed in the conduct of the study. Participants' identities remained confidential. Consents were obtained from the participants and withdrawal clause was included. This study brought no harm to the participants.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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