The Impact of Programme Accreditation on Faculty Quality Within a Community College in a Small Island Developing State

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Abstract: *The rise in the number of higher educational programmes in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has led to an increased call for programme accreditation. The purpose of this exploratory sequential mixed method s research is to investigate the impact of programme accreditation on lecturer quality of a community college within the SIDS. A phenomenological research design was used to explore the phenomena using semi-structured interviews. A sample of 15 lecturers from a population of 84 were selected purposively to partake in the study. Quantitative data was collected purposively using a survey containing five demographic variables and forty items measured using a five-point Likert Scale. The survey was administered to a sample of 50 lecturers from seven faculties. The findings revealed that seven important factors of accreditation impacted lecturer quality: (1) faculty and professional development, (2) curriculum quality, (3) mission, objectives, and strategic planning, (4) graduation outcomes, (5) teaching and learning, (6) learner progression, and (7) quality efficiency and financial resources. Lecturers believe that the institution's mission, objectives, and strategic planning shape the overall environment and culture of the faculty, which sets the tone for the other factors of programme accreditation to be effective. Correlation studies were conducted to support the qualitative findings. The results indicated low but positive associations between the institution's mission, objections, strategic planning, and lecturer quality; the other factors had moderate associations. There was no correlation between learner progression and lecturer quality. Future research should explore the prospects of examining the impact of programme accreditation on the quality of lecturers in private and public higher educational institutions.*

Keywords*:* college mission, financial resources, lecturer quality, professional development, programme accreditation, quality assurance,

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, internationalization, and accountability have impacted the increase in quality assurance mechanisms in institutions of higher learning (Perveen et al., 2021), accreditation being one such mechanism of the process. Accreditation is an important component of quality assurance for any higher education institution, as the process ensures that institutions undergo evaluations based on predefined standards (Kumar et al., 2020). It sets the tone for institutional and program recognition, quality education and training. For faculty, it provides a framework and a stamp of approval for quality teaching practices, credibility and accountability, professional development, recognition and career advancement, student achievement and success, and the enhancement of quality teaching standards.

The rise in the number of higher educational institutions, whether brick and mortar or virtual, has led to increased competition. Makhoul (2019) stated that these institutions are now competing on reputation, quality of learning provided, and employability; thus, the calibre of lecturers and their duties in upholding accreditation standards are essential. Since accreditation can provide the affirmation that there is the provision of quality education (Prado, 2020), it can also provide such affirmation of lecturer quality. Lecturer quality is the cumulative term used to describe the qualifications and characteristics of faculty (Aithal & Kumar, 2016). In a world of increasing accountability in the education systems and a more diverse population of students, policymakers and college administrators are aware of the need to uphold quality by engaging in activities that improve lecturer quality. Teacher training and professional development are components of the teaching standards necessary to build quality (Gyurko et al., 2016).

Many institutions in the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) do not have a national accreditation body. Non-independent states such as the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI), The British Virgin Islands (BVI), and the Cayman Islands have established tertiary institutions, however due to the lack of national accreditation bodies, it has sought programme validation through endorsements or through other university programmes. The Associations of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions (ACTI) was established in 1990 to address the challenges of tertiary institutions within the Caribbean and became the body geared at facilitating program articulation and collaboration between institutions (Roberts & UNESCO/IESALC, 2003). Many studies have examined the impact of accreditation on the institution, the students, and the teaching quality, but not much has been done about its impact on faculty quality. This study fills a gap in the literature. Faculty quality

is operationalized as the overall effectiveness of a teacher's instruction, the resources and tools they use, and the quality of their interaction with students.

Problem Statement

Krause (2012) promulgated that quality in higher education is seen as a "wicked problem" – a problem that is so ill-defined and under-theorized, yet higher educational institutions, the government, and other key stakeholders still use it in policymaking and funding decisions. Due to the increase in higher educational institutions worldwide, local colleges are faced with immense competition. Well-established institutions with their symbols of quality have a competitive edge over the nationalized institutions in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The "wicked problem" surfaces when the national institutions in SIDS lack programme and institutional accreditations—further promulgated by the fact that these institutions may not be able to gain international accreditation because of a lack of a national accreditation body in the country, limited infrastructure, limited research opportunities, and lack of government support. Regional and international program accreditation may be farfetched as one of the criteria for granting program accreditation is to have national accreditation. There will remain a never-ending problem for teacher quality if local institutions do not have engrained standards to drive effectiveness. Boyd et al. (2007) noted that the path to gaining accreditation might be difficult and tiring. Thus, it may reduce the appeal for teachers.

Purpose

The purpose of this exploratory sequential mixed-methods research is to investigate the impact of programme accreditation on lecturer quality of a community college within the SIDS.

Research Questions

Both qualitative and quantitative research questions were formulated for this study.

Qualitative Questions
1. What are the factors affecting program accreditation at the college?
2. How does programme accreditation affect lecturer quality?

Quantitative Questions
1. What are the mean differences in lecturer quality as perceived by the lecturers?
2. What is the association between accreditation standards and lecturer quality?

Conceptual Framework

The framework identified in Figure 1 outlines the various programme accreditation factors that may impact lecturer quality. This framework is based on the Total Quality Management Model (TQM) which postulates a holistic approach to quality through the critical areas of curriculum development, teaching and learning, and academic life (Kundu, 2016). A quality management system will shape teachers' strategies as it encourages them to develop themselves in the pursuit of efficiency and productivity (Olasunkanmi & Abbas, 2016). The framework is also based on the Outcome Based Quality Model (OBQM) because these accreditation factors are expected to measure and assess the outcome of lecturer quality. According to Tam (2014), outcomes are explained within the context in which they are used. The outcome may be at the individual student's cognitive level, programme level, and institutional level. In this study, the outcome relates to what the students have achieved to progress to another level in the educational landscape (learner progression), the graduation outcomes, and the outcome of teachers through their performance and effectiveness (teacher quality).
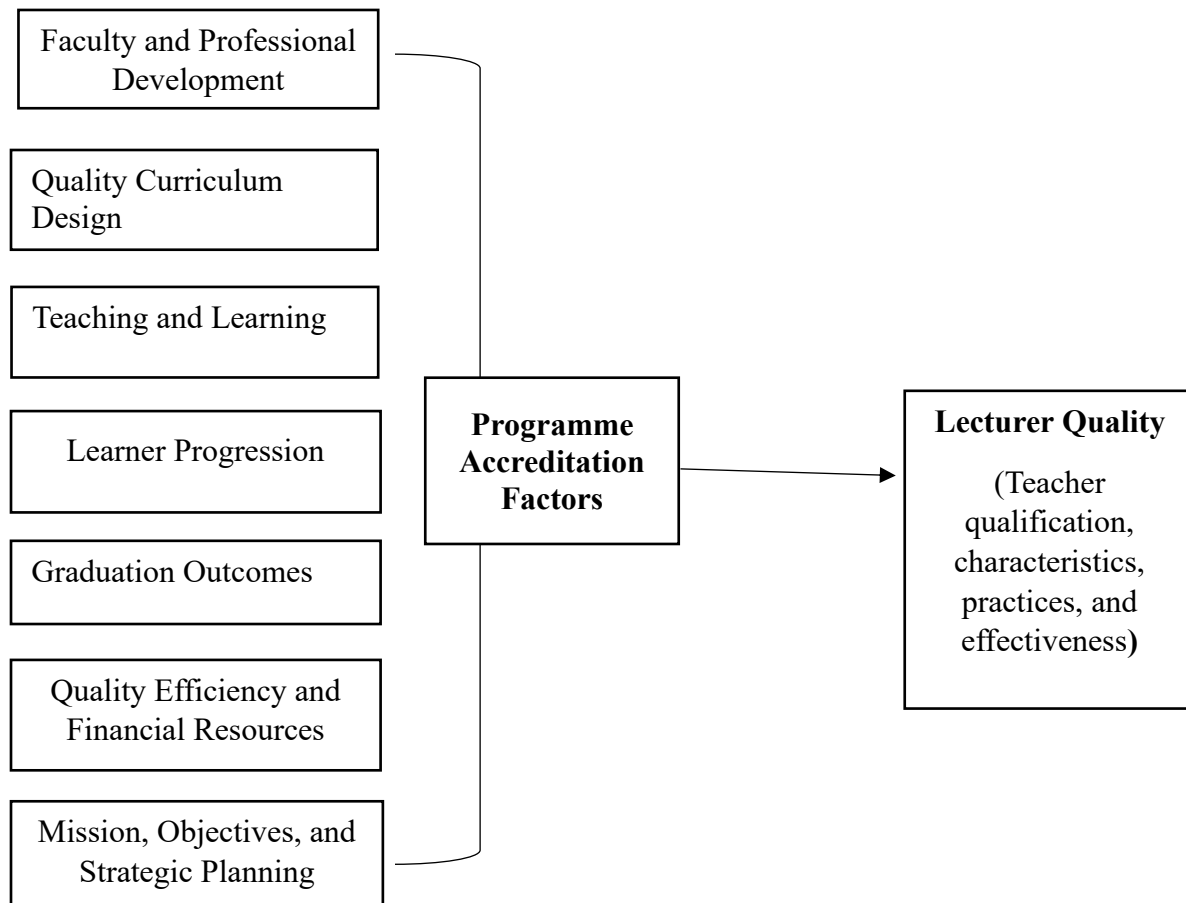
Figure 1: Factors affecting Programme Accreditation and its impact on Lecturer Quality

LITERATURE REVIEW

Accreditation is the process of evaluating an institution, allowing it to be recognized as meeting predefined standards of quality (Spowart & Turner, 2021). Accreditation is relatively new to the Caribbean region and is considered a form of quality assurance leading to the formal approval of institutions. Before accreditation, institutions, programmes, and professionals were validated through examinations, qualification endorsements by affiliation with reputable universities, proven track records, and transparency of the institution's operations (Roberts, 2003, p.13). Programme

accreditation validates programmes to meet national and international standards (Ogunode et al., 2023). This validation, according to the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA (2004), is geared towards producing graduates who are professionally competent upon completion of their programme of study. Assessment of the outcomes of programme accreditation gives an indication of the educational goals that the institution has achieved. Accreditation, in general, brings many benefits to higher education institutions. It provides a stamp of approval that the institution has met rigorous standards, facilitates excellence in curriculum preparation and delivery, enhances students' outcomes, and lecturers' quality, and improves organizational quality (Perveen et al., 2021)

Faculty/Teacher Quality

Teacher quality, also referred to as faculty or lecturer quality in higher education, is a very complex phenomenon which is difficult to define. In the quest to define teacher quality, the National Center for Education Statistics (1999) stated that there are two broad classifications of teacher quality – "quality teacher preparation and qualification, and teaching practices. Fransson et al. (2018) stated that teacher quality is measured against "professional practices and competencies" (p.243). Quality teacher preparation and qualifications refers to the education, certification and professional development of teachers, while teaching practices refer to the quality of teaching exhibited in the classroom (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). Bradford et al (2021) mentioned that a more reductionist approach to the definition of teacher quality looks at the skills and competencies of teachers from a behavioural perspective. In a comprehensive literature review, Bradford et al. (2021) stated that teacher quality deals with human performance and pedagogical traits which impact student outcomes. Geo (2007) presented a framework that operationalizes teacher quality as their qualification and characteristics, while Nilsen and Gustafsson (2016) express teacher quality as teacher qualification, job experiences, participation in professional development, and teacher characteristics (p.5). Nilsen and Gustafsson (2016) operationalized teacher characteristics as self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the teacher's positive behaviour, such as "enthusiasm, persistence, instructional behaviour, commitment, and willingness to try new instructional strategies" (Robbie-Johnson & Jones, 2021, p.3). Teacher quality may also be expressed as the level of formal education completed and major (Blömeke & Delancy, 2014). Su and Wood (2012), in an article which explores students' perception of a good university lecturer, found that lecturer quality comprises the lecturers' knowledge, emotions, and attitude. Therefore, lecturer quality could be operationalized as lecturers' willingness to assist students, using "aspirational teaching methods", humour, and providing quick feedback (Su & Wood, 2012, p. 143). Alias et al. (2020) examined the qualities of a lecturer most desirable to students. They also

found attitudinal and behavioural qualities. They believe lecturers must possess expert knowledge, be an effective communicator, and be creative, credible, and supportive (Alias et al., 2020). Though the definitions vary and are unstandardized, teacher quality is often viewed from four lenses: teacher qualification, teacher characteristics, teacher practices, and teacher effectiveness (Goe & Stickler, 2008).

Factors Affecting Program Accreditation and Its Impact on Teacher Quality

Faculty and Professional Development

The capacity building of a higher educational institution is done through professional development (Kumar, 2017). Professional development is any activity designed to improve the skills and competencies of teachers, improve teaching and learning, and provide an update on the teacher's knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Gast et al., 2022). The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) accreditation standards enhance the quality of education by ensuring that institutions among the member states meet specific criteria (The Caribbean Community Task Force on Teacher Education, 2013). The professional development standard focuses on improving teachers through ongoing training and education, self-assessment reflective strategies, networking and collaboration, aligning professional development activities with the national standards, and accountability measures where they take responsibility for their own professional improvements (CARICOM Secretariat, 2020). Additionally, the Teaching Standards, which is a measure of quality, urges the Governments and education authorities to provide opportunities for the teachers' professional development and action research to not only boost teacher quality but also students' development (Educational International & UNESCO, 2019).

Teachers who are involved in professional development activities are likely to become more specialized, thus improving their quality (Bonney et al., 2015). Barrera-Pedemonte (2016) stated that once there is a direct link between faculty professional development that is focused on the curriculum, it impacts faculty discourse and quality. Continuous professional development improves teacher quality as it enhances and updates their skills, empowers and stimulates lecturers, allows for the mastery of teaching methods, and updates concepts pertaining to teaching (Jia & Ma, 2023). As a prerequisite for quality education, Thorat (2008) stated that capacity building is necessary for teachers' quality because their skills and knowledge are improved then they become eligible for promotion. Kiran et al. (2022) conducted a study among teachers examining the impact of professional development and teacher quality. The results showed that all teachers agreed their performances were improved through professional development (M=3.8, SD=0.52). While there

are differences in responses among teachers, Meagher (2011) found no correlation between teacher professional development and lecturer quality measured through job satisfaction (r=.14, p=.27).

Quality Curriculum Design and Effectiveness

The University of the West Indies defined quality as "fitness for purpose" (Roberts, 2009, p.4). A quality curriculum should be fit for purpose as it is designed to drive students' outcomes through teaching while supporting research-based pedagogy, aligning with standards, and producing rich content (Steiner et al., 2018). Quality curriculum design is necessary to drive programme accreditation in higher education. Standard 4 - curriculum effectiveness of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago maintains that the curriculum should be constantly evaluated to determine its effectiveness, relevance, and certification maintenance (Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, 2005). For an institution to have a quality curriculum, Wood et al. (2019) argued that it must include political and industry context and meet their needs. Faculty members are responsible for developing, evaluating, and redesigning the curriculum within higher education institutions; therefore, faculty must work together to build students' knowledge and skills and improve lecturer quality. Nordin and Wahlstrom (2019) stated that curriculum is a pertinent element of teacher quality as what is taught reflects teachers' readiness, performance, and efficiency.

Teaching and Learning

The CARICOM standards for teaching and learning outline the performance and expectations for the teaching profession. The framework suggests that the development of quality teachers is viewed holistically and encompasses teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes (CARICOM Secretariat, 2020). A look at the Barbados Accreditation Standards number 3 relates to teaching and learning. Standard three maintains that a programme's teaching and learning process must be measured by students' learning outcomes and the effectiveness of the teaching staff. Therefore, procedures should be in place to effectively plan and evaluate the programme objectives (Barbados Accreditation Council, 2004). The University Council of Jamaica recommends regularly evaluating faculty performance to improve teaching effectiveness (University Council of Jamaica, 2018). Teacher quality is directly associated with student learning outcomes such as achievement, satisfaction, and retention rates (Ding & Sherman, 2006). Student-centered teaching approaches such as discovery learning and collaborative projects are said to improve teacher efficacy, which is a form of teacher quality (Woodcock et al., 2022). When the focus is on improving instructional strategies to boost student outcomes, lecturer quality improves (Tadessee & Khalid, 2022).

Learner Progression and Graduation Outcomes

Learner progression is the advancement of students to complete their academic programmes of study leading to graduation (Shahane, 2022). It involves the structuring and sequencing of learner outcomes and expectations along different stages of their educational development and as they move up or progress from one year to the next in their studies. Learner progression will consider students' skills, programme pathways, and knowledge. Understanding learner progression guides the teacher in preparing lessons and developing instructional strategies tailored to meet learners' expectations. Since learner progression provides a foundation for better assessment practices, the teachers may use this as a benchmark of their performance. In addition, learners within the higher education landscape are tasked with evaluating and assessing their teachers, who then use these assessments to improve their knowledge, skills, and pedagogical practices (Akram, 2019) – all these symbolize lecturer quality. Akram (2019) conducted a correlational study among 40 students who were selected using a strata sampling method; the results showed that there is a moderately significant association between learner progression and teacher quality ($r = .46$, $p \leq .05$).

Programmes accreditation acts as a quality assurance mechanism for students' graduation outcomes. Students' graduation is a performance metric used in many higher educational institutions to evaluate teacher quality. An institution with a high graduation rate may see an improvement in teacher quality as teachers strive to be more efficient, thus reducing scrutiny and pressure (Horn & Jang, 2017).

Quality Efficiency and Financial Resources

Quality efficiency, also referred to as total quality management, is defined as the quality management practices to improve the quality of the teaching staff, the effectiveness of the institution and students' holistic development (Rahman et al., 2021) through the acts of planning, monitoring (Vlasic, et al., 2009), and evaluation. Standard 5-Quality Enhancement of the Barbados Accreditation Standard purports that a programme should use a systematic approach to assessing educational quality in higher education to improve outcomes (Barbados Accreditation Council, 2004). Efficient quality management is the solution as it creates a supportive environment for lecturers and improves the quality of the teaching staff. Lazic et al. (2021) contends that there is no simple way to define quality within higher educational institutions. However, it is seen as a multidimensional concept and may be discussed from different perspectives – quality management is one perspective. Quality management creates an atmosphere where teacher's efficacy is improved, allowing them to improve their time and efforts in their professional development and teaching practices. A positive working environment leads to improved teaching quality. According

to Rahman et al. (2021), the quality management systems in educational institutions have declined, and emphasis must be placed on this issue if quality teachers are to remain employed. Quality effectiveness leads to greater accessibility of learning materials, up-to-date teaching content, and greater response time (Kundu, 2017). Olasunkanmi and Abbas (2016) conducted a study in Nigeria among fifty lecturers and found a significant correlation between total quality management and lecturer quality (r =.137, p<0.05).

Inadequate funding affects tertiary institutions, making it challenging to recruit and train quality teachers (Ogunode et al., 2023). Financial resources of HEIs in SIDS pose a challenge since revenues come exclusively from Government subventions and students' tuition (Marinescu, 2022); effective quality management will involve strategic resource allocation that supports teachers' financial needs. This will ensure that teachers have access to the necessary materials and financial resources (Nilsen & Gustafsson, 2016). Adequate resources facilitate better lesson planning and execution, positively impacting teacher quality (Dorovolomo et al., 2010).

Mission, Objectives, and Strategic Planning

Standard 1: Mission and Objectives of the Barbados Accreditation Council maintains that a programme of study should be consistent with the mission and objectives of the institution (Barbados Accreditation Council, 2004). The mission, objectives, and Strategies of an institution shape its operation and success and may impact the lecturers' quality – impacting the scope of the lecturer's work. It may impact the lecturer's willingness to undertake specific actions, professional duties, or desired outcomes (Ashcroft & Foreman-Peck, 1995). Mission statements provide key stakeholders with a guiding mindset towards goal attainment. This will improve programmes, processes, and shared success. Strategic planning gives meaning to the mission statement of the HEI and channels the goals and objectives, providing clear direction for the institution (Wattanunimitkul, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

This study used an exploratory sequential mixed methodology. The researcher used a pragmatic approach to collect data qualitatively, followed by quantitative data collection to support qualitative findings. A phenomenological approach was used for the qualitative aspect of the research. For the quantitative aspect of the study, a survey approach was used because the researcher wanted to determine the impact through correlations and examine differences in responses.

The study population consisted of 86 faculty members from seven faculties. For the qualitative sampling method, purposive sampling was used to collect data from fifteen lecturers because the researcher wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of the investigated phenomenon. For the quantitative method, purposive sampling was used to collect data from fifty lecturers. This method was deliberately chosen because of the small number of lecturers within the college.

Instrumentation
The interview schedule containing ten semi-structured questions was created. The duration of the interviews should last for thirty minutes. The credibility of the data was achieved through data triangulation and data saturation. A close-ended survey was designed using information obtained from the qualitative data results, various programme accreditation standards, and extant literature. The survey consisted of five demographic questions and forty statements. Thirty-five statements examined the extent to which the institution's faculty shows readiness for programme accreditation along seven engagement standards. The activities are (1) faculty and professional development, (2) curriculum quality, (3) mission, objectives, and strategic planning, (4) graduation outcomes, (5) teaching and learning, (6) learner progression, and (7) quality efficiency and financial resources. Five statements were used to measure lecturer quality. These statements related to the constructs of teacher qualification, teacher characteristics, teaching practices, and teacher effectiveness**)**. The Cronbach Alpha for the survey instrument was used to determine the reliability of the scale. An alpha of $\alpha = .94$ was recorded, indicating the scale's reliability.

Data Collection Procedures
Data was collected from lecturers of the institution representing seven faculties. The researcher sought permission to conduct research through the institution's research committee. Once acceptance was granted, the researcher gained access to the study group by inviting participants to partake in an interview. Once written consent was given, the researcher commenced the interview in a quiet space designated by the institution. Two weeks after qualitative data was collected and analyzed, the researcher entered the field to collect quantitative data by issuing an online survey generated in Google Forms. After gaining consent and further debriefing, participants' data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the study by maintaining the guiding principles of the Belmont Report.

Data Analysis
Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis. The data was transcribed and coded, and themes were created that represented the data. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive

and inferential statistics for the quantitative data collected. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviations were used to determine the mean differences in lecturer quality as perceived by the lecturers. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the association between the accreditation factors and teacher quality. The test variables were transformed into continuous variables; there were no spurious outliers; linear relationships existed among the variables, and the variables were normal. In this study, mean scores between 1-2.0 were considered "low", 2.1-3.5 were "moderate", and means of 3.6-5 were considered "high". The Burns and Grove (2009) criteria were used to report the correlation where (.2-.39) represented low correlation, (.4-.69) represented moderate correlation, and (.7-1.0) represented high correlation.

FINDINGS

Demographic Results
The study consisted of 19 males (38%) and 31 females (62%) from seven faculties within the college. Seven lecturers were between the ages 26-35 (14%), 22 between the ages 36-45 (44%), and 21 were 46 years of age and older (42%). Three (6%) lecturers held a bachelor's degree, 37 lecturers held a master's degree (74%), and ten (2%) held a doctoral degree as their highest level of qualification. Forty full-time lecturers (80%) and ten adjunct lecturers (20%) were included in the study.

Qualitative Findings

RQ1: What are the factors affecting program accreditation in your college?
To answer this research question, interview data were analyzed using content analysis. When asked about the factors affecting programme accreditation among faculties within the college, similar themes were derived from the analysis of the responses. Lecturers believed that the main factors that affected programme accreditation were faculty and professional development, the state of the curriculum, the non-alignment of the programme goals to the mission, objectives, and strategic plan, and the level of quality efficiency and financial resources, the graduation outcomes, teaching and learning outcomes, and learner progression,
Respondent 3 stated

> *"In my opinion, two of the major factors affecting the programme accreditation of this college are that the program goals are not properly aligned to the goals, mission and strategic plans of the college, and faculty are not properly trained and engaged through professional development activities, we must fix those before we can approach any*

accreditation body. I believe our associate degree curriculum needs a bit of work to be in line with accreditation standards; however, for the faculties that use the CCCJ curriculum, I do not foresee us having an issue where that is concerned."

Respondent 2 stated that:

"There are many factors affecting programme accreditation within our faculties at the college. Accreditation bodies examine graduation outcomes as one of the criteria when evaluating a higher educational institution's readiness for accreditation. Over the years, some faculties have consistently had low numbers of graduates or none for some programmes, so this is something we need to work on. Accreditation bodies focus on outcomes; for our college, there are data to support that our learners have progressed from one state to another, whether it is from a prerequisite course or one programme to another in order of progression. We have some issues with student retention in some faculties, but this is something we have tried to work on, and it will get better over time, especially with the free tuition for the local and BOTC students."

Respondent 7 stated that:

"Quality assurance is definitely an issue. As faculties, we need to fix that. Though we have a quality assurance manager, it's only one person and it's difficult to try and fix everything immediately since in the past there were no quality standards in place for us to operate as faculties. Another issue may be financial as we rely on government subvention, we have seen cuts in faculty budgets over the year, and as a faculty we are not able to effectively carry out our mandates because of the lack of funds. If this is an issue, professional development and teacher/student outcomes will be affected. And if my memory serves me well, these will affect the accreditation evaluation process."

RQ2: How does programme accreditation affect lecturer quality?

Six interview questions were used to gather data to answer this research question. Based on analysis, lecturer quality covered themes relating to their attitudes, subject mastery, lecturer preparedness, lecturers' interpersonal skills and work discipline. When lecturers were asked what they understood about the term "lecturer quality. " lecturers in their responses, used the terms quality of lecturers, quality of teachers, lecturer quality, and teacher quality to answer the question. Their understandings all related to the lecturers' characteristics and attributes that made them effective lecturers in the promotion of students' learning outcomes. Respondents all agreed that for the lecturers to be effective, they must have positive attributes and characteristics such as good

communication skills, numeracy skills, connecting with students, and creating positive environments conducive to learning. Respondents believed that lecturers should have passion, drive, motivation, and discipline for the job. Respondent 10 stated that:

> *"I believe lecturer quality relates to the personal and professional characteristics that will drive the lecturer to perform well. It relates to the lecturers' background and qualification, certification, number of years of teaching experience, and their teaching skills are the foundations of lecturer quality within the higher educational landscape. When lecturers have a positive attitude towards teaching, provide a warm, friendly atmosphere conducive to learning, or have good work discipline and are motivated to complete tasks, these are what I would describe as lecturer quality.*

Respondent 3 also stated that:
> *"Lecturer quality is not so easy to define. However, I believe it relates to the lecturers' characteristics, readiness, and output. It has a lot to do with lecturers having the requisite knowledge and skills necessary to plan for and execute instructions. For example, if Lecturers have good interpersonal skills necessary to communicate fully with students to foster a better learning climate, that's lecturer quality. If Lecturers are highly prepared for content delivery resulting in increased student learning, this also speaks to lecturer quality."*

When asked how programme accreditation impacts the overall reputation and credibility of the faculty members, respondent 2 stated that.

> *"For me, when a program is accredited, it is enough validation that the teaching staff are well qualified and trained and shows that our teaching and curriculum are aligned with standards, whether domestic or international standards. Therefore, it's not only the institution that is seen as credible, but we are seen as more creditable lecturers within the country."*

Respondent 4 stated that:

> *"I am actively involved in research, so too are several lecturers from various faculties. So, I believe that through faculty accreditation, the institution will gain more recognition and*

our reputation as researchers will be increased. It can expose us to greater networking and collaboration which will further increase our outwardness and reputation.

When asked to what extent does programme accreditation affects lecturers' effective performance within the faculty, most respondents stated that lecturers are forced to perform at the highest level to maintain the accreditation status. Since accreditation comes with the institution meeting and maintaining standards, there will be various expectations that faculty will need to meet. Respondent 1 stated that:

"As a faculty, we will surely come under pressure to maintain standards, so we will have to work harder to meet our goals and be more efficient. Knowing our college, they will ensure that there is a greater level of accountability and transparency. I like this because it increases lecturers' quality."

When asked how programme accreditation ensures that lecturers meet established quality standards, Respondent 6 stated:

"From what I know, the accreditation bodies have set standards that the college will need to ascribe to. The standard will tell the qualifications necessary to teach in a programme, the curriculum design, and so on. Therefore, it dictates how lecturers should operate and by extension, maintaining the effectiveness and the integrity of the institution. So, the lecturers will be forced into meeting the standards and maintaining quality."

When asked what specific criteria should be considered during the programme accreditation process to evaluate the lecturer's quality, common themes resonated from coding the data. Themes include having the requisite qualifications and certification, the requisite number of years of teaching experience, contribution to research, the ability to develop and amend curriculum, good teaching skills and methods, being able to engage students, being able to collaborate, and the ability to partake in professional development activities. Respondent 4 stated that

"Having the requisite qualification is an essential faculty quality. Faculty should have a degree higher than the programme they will be lecturing. For example, lecturers should possess a master's degree in a related area if they will teach in the bachelor's degree programme, and a doctorate if they will be teaching in the master's degree programmes."

The participants were asked how programme accreditation contributes to improving the professional development of lecturers within the college. The respondents all agreed that programme accreditation helps to create a culture for professional development among colleges and faculties that never saw it as important. Respondent 7 stated that due to programme accreditation, professional development will now be ongoing and more structured towards the needs of the lecturers; the respondent stated:

> *"I see where the faculties will evaluate their professional development activities and improve them for the future so as to continuously build on the human capital. It should be easy as the activities would be amended based on best practices and changes within the society."*

When asked how employers perceive graduates from faculty-accredited programmes compared to those from non-accredited programmes the respondents all agreed that employers prefer students who have graduated from accredited programmes. Respondent 2 stated that since programme accreditation is a symbol of quality, the employers can rest assured that the curriculum taught to the students is based on some high standards. Therefore, the students should be in the workforce and have much knowledge to contribute to society. Respondent 5 stated that:

> *"Programme accreditation creates trust, accountability, credibility, and recognition, which are all symbols of quality. Therefore, we expect that employers will see graduates from accredited programmes in a positive light and place more confidence in their potential. I am sure employers view employees from accredited programmes with greater reputation and prestige. For example, if our Nursing programme is not accredited, then employers would rather employ graduate Nurses from accredited institutions because of the qualities I spoke of earlier."*

The respondents were asked, "What measures can a higher education institution put in place to ensure that accredited programs remain up to date with lecturers of good quality?" Common themes emerged from the data. These themes include regular curriculum review, continuous faculty development and training, implementing a robust performance evaluation system, greater stakeholder engagement, review and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms, and more data-driven decision-making. Respondent 9 summed this all up by stating:

"I believe higher education institutions (and I am using our institution to answer this question), can have a quality assurance committee to ensure that we focus on oversight of the accredited programs – currently, we only have one person in charge of quality. We could also say that the college does not see data analytics as important. This is a big tool to help ensure our accredited programmes are kept up to date. We need to document and analyze data such as our student's performance records, track graduation rates, examine and conduct proper student evaluations, and examine the use of program satisfaction surveys to get information. This is where the research committee comes in. In addition, this will inform programme adjustments of the college. Even if we keep employment statistics such as lecturers' performance evaluations, lecturers' work plans, etc., this will ensure that we maintain quality."

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Results showed that overall, lecturer quality was high for the college ($M = 3.89, SD = .871$). When lecturers displayed positive attitudes towards teaching, providing a warm, friendly atmosphere conducive to learning, this was reflected as high lecturer quality ($M = 3.84, SD = 1.13$). The mean and standard deviations for lecturers' quality are displayed in Table 1. The highest quality was exhibited when lecturers had the requisite knowledge and skills necessary to plan for and execute instruction ($M = 4.06, SD = .843$). The lowest quality of lecturers related to their work discipline and their motivation to complete tasks ($M = 3.7, SD = .789$).

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation for Lecturer Quality

Lecturer Quality	N	M	SD
Lecturers have a positive attitude towards teaching, providing a warm, friendly atmosphere conducive to learning	50	3.84	1.13
Lecturers have good interpersonal skills necessary to communicate fully with students to foster a better learning climate	50	3.94	.842
Lecturers have good work discipline and are motivated to complete tasks	50	3.70	.789
Lecturers have the requisite knowledge and skills necessary to plan for and execute instruction	50	4.06	.843
Lecturers are highly prepared for content delivery, resulting in increased student learning	50	3.92	.751

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to examine the association between the college's program accreditation standards and lecturer quality. The results showed low but positive

associations between the institution's mission, objections, strategic planning and lecturer quality (*r = .385, p = .013*). Lecturer quality is moderate but positively associated with faculty efficiency and professional development. (*r = .584, p = .000*), curriculum quality (*r = .591, p = .000*), teaching and learning (*r = .545, p = .000*), graduation outcomes (*r = .511, p = .001*), and quality efficiency and financial resources (*r = .632, p = .000*). There was no statistically significant association between learner progression and lecturer quality.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Between Accreditation Factors and Lecturer Quality.

	MOSP	FAPD	CURR	TAL	LPROG	QEAFR	GRADO	LQTY
MOSP	1							
FAPD	.746**	1						
CQLTY	.389*	.674*	1					
TAL	.802*	.745**	.600**	1				
LPROG	.677**	.667**	.412*	.827**	1			
QEAFR	.694**	.677**	.611**	.910**	.680**	1		
GRADO	.372*	.600**	.766**	.617**	.626*	.602**	1	
LQTY	.385*	.584**	.591**	.545**	.306	.632**	.511**	1

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2 tailed)
*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2 tailed)

MOSP (Mission, objectives, and strategic planning), FAPD (Faculty and Professional Development), CQLTY (Curriculum Quality), TAL (Teaching and Learning), LPROG (Learner Progression), QEAFR (quality efficiency and financial resources), GRADO (Graduate Outcomes), LQTY (Lecturer Outcomes).

DISCUSSION

Though unclear and used interchangeably with teaching quality, the concept of teacher quality is measured against national and international frameworks, standards, and policies.
Small Island Developing States have used education policies to demonstrate quality among teachers. Though the Island College has yet to adopt standardized national professional and accreditation standards for teachers or gain institutional and programme accreditation, the key insignia relates to the quality of lecturers it employs and continues to develop.

The qualitative results showed that programme accreditation has an impact on faculty quality within the higher education landscape. Respondents stated that the quest to achieve teacher quality lies in the quality of curriculum and assessment used for pedagogy, the quality of student graduates, the institution's mark on its internal lecturers professional development, the alignment of the programme goals to the mission, objectives, and strategic planning, teaching and learning outcomes, learner progression, and the level of efficiency in the quality management systems and financial resources of the college, The qualitative results also pointed to learner progression as a factor to be considered when focusing on programme accreditation.

Quantitative results also showed that the accreditation standards impact teacher quality. Quality efficiency and financial resources had the most significant impact on lecturers' quality, followed by curriculum quality and lecturers' professional development. The mission, objectives, and strategic planning have the least impact on lecturer quality. The results showed no statistically significant association between learner progression and lecturer quality. Though there are many studies pointing to an association between the two variables, it must be noted that lecturer quality influences student outcomes and may not give a vice versa result. Tabe (2023) examined teacher quality as a factor affecting students' academic performance and found a correlation between teacher quality and student progression through performance; this refutes our current findings.

The study's results are not surprising as lecturers mean scores of their perceived quality were highest for their "professional knowledge" as a measure of quality. That is, lecturers felt they had the "requisite knowledge and skills necessary to plan for and execute instruction" (M=4.06, SD=.843). On the contrary, the lowest quality of lecturers related to their work discipline and their motivation to complete tasks ($M = 3.7$, $SD = .789$). This means that there are psychological factors at play that may be impacting lecturer quality in addition to the accreditation factors. Since work discipline is an issue, this must be rectified so as not to affect teacher quality. After all, work discipline contributes to productivity.

Professional development impacts lecturer quality by allowing lecturers to improve their attitudinal, behavioural, and professional skills. It is seen as a tool used to develop the subject matter expertise of the lecturers, provide strategies for overcoming pedagogical challenges, and allow for collaboration and sustained engagement. The lasting impact is that lecturers will sharpen their skills and apply the training to the classroom. Professional development must be linked to the college's mission, objectives, and strategies. The linkage may lead to resource optimization and

the improvement of lecturer quality. This interplay among the accreditation factors was evident in the participant's responses and results of the correlational study.

The quality management efficiency and quality of curriculum can be closely connected to professional development as a means of improving lecturer quality. The results showed a statistically significant relationship between quality efficiency and faculty professional development. This positive association means that for a lecturer to develop their personal and professional accolades, their skills and competencies must be heightened through developmental activities, and management must provide lecturers with a supportive environment. Once there is a sound quality management system in place, it will allow the organization to achieve its goals, mission, vision, and strategic objectives. Since the quality management system provides guidance on how to deliver quality and improve the processes relating to teaching, monitoring students, and implementing corrective measures when needed, teacher performance, which is a mark of quality, will be improved.

The issue of not having an accreditation body in most Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has impacted teacher quality because many standards are unenforced. One thing for certain is that due to the change in the educational landscape, there is much diversity in learning. The diversity in the learning space has led to high expectations of lecturer quality. Because of the advent of online learning, distance learning, e-learning, and the use of artificial intelligence, there will be challenges that may have an impact on the efficiency of teachers and students. Therefore, teacher training, curriculum, and professional development must take those diversities into consideration if these teachers are to be "fit for purpose." These new and improved developments in the higher education landscape may change the status quo of the roles of lecturers and that of the quality standards (Van Damme, 2004). As Van Damme stated, since the internal constituents have changed due to diversity, external accreditation bodies must move from a robust quality assurance system and provide a more concise definition of quality.

In higher education, there should be frequent self-evaluation, student-evaluation practices, and various feedback mechanisms for the continuous improvement of teacher quality.
In addition, quality assurance mechanisms must be established in the SIDS institutions. Zhang et al. (2019) stated that there must be a teacher quality assurance system that develops standards that improve incentives and accountability. While Nan (2021) concluded to have high-quality teachers, ethics must be constructed and reshaped; training is needed at the post-service and pre-service levels, quality training systems are needed, change and modernize the teacher management

systems, eliminate all areas of weaknesses, and provide an improvement in the systems to build a strong foundation and defence mechanisms for quality teachers.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of programme accreditation on lecturer quality of a community college within the SIDS. The study investigated qualitatively the factors affecting program accreditation in the college and how programme accreditation affects lecturer quality. It may be concluded that lecturers believed faculty and professional development, the quality of the curriculum, the mission, objectives, and strategic planning, students' graduation outcomes, the teaching and learning process, learner progression, and quality efficiency and financial resources (also referred to as total quality management) were the factors of accreditation that impacted lecturer quality. The respondents believed that the quality assurance committee should be formed to ensure that the college focuses on overseeing the accredited programs. It may be concluded that quality efficiency and financial resources had the greatest impact on teacher quality, followed by curriculum quality and faculty professional development. There is no statistically significant impact of learner progression on teacher quality, but that does not mean there is no indirect relationship. This study bridges a gap in the literature by examining the interplay of accreditation standards on teacher quality as most studies focus on student quality and teaching quality (the process and not the person).

Contributions and Implications of this Study

Institutions seeking programme accreditation must understand how the various accreditation and teaching standards may impact the quality of their lecturers. This study has contributed to the body of knowledge by filling the gaps in several ways: (1) by showing the disparity between lecturers' objective and subjective responses relating to lecturer quality, (2) by looking at the accreditation standards that best impact teacher quality, and (3) by collecting lecturers' rich responses on the topic. The quantitative results revealed no statistically significant relationship between learner progression and lecturer quality despite this being one of the major factors according to the participant's responses while collecting and analyzing qualitative data. Lecture quality is heightened and achieved through professional development, curriculum quality, and total quality management; therefore, the study will have significant implications for administrators when seeking to improve the quality of lecturers.

Recommendations

As small Island Developing States continue to face the challenges of having a nationalized accreditation body, they aim to continuously pursue quality through quality assurance practices. These nations should ensure that education at the higher level is enhanced for sustainability, despite the level of competition and in the face of adversity. It is recommended that the institution under investigation continue to enforce curriculum and development for sustainability and teacher quality through capacity building, professional development opportunities, and experiential learning. Institutions that are not accredited but affiliated with an accredited institution through their programme offerings should strive to improve teacher quality by maintaining national teaching and accreditation standards.

Future Research

Teacher quality from the perspective of the students within the higher educational landscape could be examined in future research. This will give perspectives from a different lens and fill the gap in the literature. In addition, various literature points to the interconnectedness among the accreditation factors, and these need to be further studied empirically. For future research, the differences in lecturers' quality could be analyzed using independent samples t-test or one-way analysis of variance to determine where the differences lie in their perception of teacher quality.

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