ENDURING THE JOURNEY OF THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUITIONS THROUGH MOBILIZING ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

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ABSTRACT:

Organizations that cultivate the "whole person" (Chisholm, 1989) will help in aligning the actors' needs and satisfaction with the overall objectives and strategy of the organization. The paper exhibits the importance of boosting the human potential to tackle the accreditation process at a private University in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Qualimetric Intervention Research methodology applied in this paper will translate the University strategy and the actors' voices into a living "experience" that will be reshaped and evolved to secure a sustainable foundation.(Savall, Zardet & Bonnet, 2000-2008). The Competency Grid and the Priority Action Plan tools sketched in this study will illustrate on various findings. First, HEI can respond to external factors by enriching the job design of their staff and without losing their identity. Second, engaging administrative staff in designing the accreditation process will lead to a higher sustainability. Third, HEI "actors" must be willing to embrace new skills and be adequate to the application of the new emerging platform in their daily activities. The findings indicate that the organization learning is not limited to handling information, it engages in translating knowledge by decoding actions and behaviors. (Fiol & Lyles, 1985)

Keywords: Higher Education Institutions, Human Potential, Sustainability, Accreditation, Competency Grid, Qualimetrics Intervention Research, Competency Grid, Administrative Staff, Job Design, Engaging.

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) moved from a vivid and certain backdrop to a complex and uncertain era. Following the Bologna agenda to compete in the market and to comply with quality requirements, universities got involved in the accreditation[1] process more than 8300 HEI are accredited by the accrediting commissions in the USA. (CHEA, 2016) Recently, American and

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[1] *Accreditation is* defined by Wikipedia online as "process in which certification of competency, authority, or credibility is presented".

European Universities have played a significant role in the development of the accreditation process. The interaction between accrediting & ranking bodies and the senior managers at HEI shape the image of Universities. (Pettigrew et al., 2014) The AACSB[2] and the EQUIS[3] have improved the quality of education and contributed to raising the performance and the learning outcomes of the students. (Urgel, 2007; Trapnell, 2007) In 2017, 780 business schools have earned AACSB Accreditation from 53 countries. (AACSB, 2017) Moreover, accreditation generates an added value in the "governance" of HEI. (Stensaker &Harvey, 2006)

Despite the various advantages of accreditation process at HEI, irresistible forces might affect them negatively. The engagement in the accreditation process induces several challenges. First, the accreditation standards can mislead HEI with "many decorations" and will lack rationality. (Fullan, 2007) Ultimately, the output, the focus and the rational of quality improvement will be uncertain. (Harvey & Newton, 2004) Second, HEI have to map the accreditation standards with the daily activities to avoid a higher level of bureaucracy. It contemplates on "efficiency" over "effectiveness" by applying quantified indicators. (McDavid & Huse, 2015) Julian & Ofori- Dankwa (2006) argues that American accreditation is likely to paralyze schools in their ability to adapt to environmental changes, leading to a kind of "accreditocracy." Third, accreditation will demand from HEI a long term commitment; thus HEI should have a coherent prospect of their future affiliation with the accreditation commissions. (Roller et al., 2003) Fourth, universities while carrying out the accreditation process they are experiencing a "hidden knowledge" that might negatively affect their performance (Fullan, 2014). Fifth, accreditation may decrease the level of creativity at HEI and may not tackle the needs of students. (McDavid & Huse, 2015)

With this in mind, accreditation necessitates a change process. The research paper drawn from the observed literature about staff engagement during organization change will portray how HEI staff integrates the matrix of accreditation through an Intervention Research at a University in the Gulf region seeking international and national accreditation to simulate its competitive role. The paper will explore mobilizing the administrative staff engagement in order to survive with the accreditation journey. The uniqueness of this paper is examining in depth the different patterns of the University during change and mainly the alignment of the accreditation within the daily activities by listening to the administrative staff stories.

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[2] *AACSB: the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business is a global, nonprofit membership organization of educational institutions, businesses, and other entities devoted to the advancement of management education. Established in 1916, AACSB International provides its members with a variety of products and services to assist them with the continuous improvement of their business programs and schools.*

[3]*The European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) is a school accreditation system. It specializes in higher education institutions of management and Business administration, run by the European Foundation for Management Development.*

2-LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations while coping with change and specifically HEI riding the roller coaster of the accreditation process will face several challenges. Van de Ven (1986) sketched four fundamental challenges during the management of change: "a human problem of managing attention" - "a process problem in managing new ideas" -"a structural problem of managing part-whole relationships" -"a strategic problem of institutional leadership." The paper will shed light on overcoming the human problem challenge during change. French (1969) listed seven main objectives that summarize the paradox of organization diagnosis:

- *"Increase level of trust and support among organization members*
- *Increase the incidence of confrontation of organizational problems both within and among groups.*

- *Create an environment in which authority of assigned role is augmented by authority based on knowledge and skill*
- *Increase the openness's of communication laterally, vertically and diagonally*
- *Increase the level of personal enthusiasm and satisfaction in the organization*
- *Find Synergistic solutions to problems with greater frequency*
- *Increase the level of self-group responsibility in planning and implementation" (p.23)*

Savall (1975-2010) has drawn a concept of redesigning job by insisting on "simultaneous actions" among all the actors at all levels that positively develops the practices of an organization. Buller (1988) underlined that the primary roles of the human resources professional would be to draw the attention on "the strategic importance of the organization's people and culture", and to convey plans to staff at all levels. (p. 46)
As a consequence, an organization culture that is built on a combination of empowerment teamwork, training, and flexible communication will develop a decentralized leadership, a proactive and long-term management system.

2.1 Change & trends at hei

HEI to survive in the competitive environment have to manage three types of change: "the strategic adjustments," the strategic reorientations," and the "transformational change." (Lawler & Worley, 2006, p.9) To do so, first HEI actors are required to underpin innovative objectives and to acquire the will to adapt to changes. Second, the accreditation standards need to be designed to contemplate with the particular culture of HEI. Otherwise, the new standards will be weakly integrated with the daily activities of HEI and may generate negative impact. (Cruz, 2009) Indeed, to respond to the new trends in HEI, an implementation of a proactive management scheme is essential to achieve greater performance. (Magd and Curry, 2003& Pettigrew et al., 2014) Fullan (2001)

argues that understanding change and unlocking the mysteries will lead to complexity in leadership. So, to accept the differences and spread the importance of the new challenges, leadership has to be oriented toward synchronization between the internal and external environment. (p.179) Fullan (2014) links` the success of leadership during culture change to five crucial components

> *"leaders will increase their effectiveness if they pursue moral purpose, understand the change process, develop relationships, foster knowledge building and strive for coherence with energy, enthusiasm, and hopefulness"(P.11).*

By avoiding both the Taylorisim effect that treats humans as "instruments of production" and which kills "their potential and creativity" and the Fayol's effect of "functional structure" and centralization that narrows the staff coordination and limits the value added of tasks rather than fostering a global performance; organization will excel in the market. (Worley et al., 2015, p.29) In this framework, leadership in HEI to be successful has to rely on the actors' initiatives in guiding the process:

> *"Thus, leadership using critical debate, communication, collegiality, open examination, and persuasion should dominate bureaucratic control if strategic change and execution is to be successful in academia."... The role of deans, therefore, is to champion their school's leadership process and manage, build, and execute their school's strategic agenda over time."* (Hommel & Thomas 2014, p.11-12)

Therefore with the emergence of change and with HEI not succeeding in responding to the changing trends, maximizing the human potential will be the key to agility and to increasing the overall performance. (Hommel& Thomas, 2014) Berry (2011) links the optimization of a system to the interconnectivity of all the organization components: "optimization can occur when all interconnecting components are orchestrated to achieve the organization's goal." (p.2) From this context, to survive the complexity of change the people within the organization are the main motivator for organization survival. (Benjamin & Mabey, 1993; Savall, 1975; 2010) In summary during change, HEI managers have to decide whether to decentralize the activities and push it down to all levels or to centralize the activities and decisions.

2.2 Boosting the human potential

Managing people at an organization is referred to as the **"soft"** aspect of a business. (Peffer, et.al. 1993, 2005) Savall (1975-2010) in his book *work and people* mentions the word **"inert"** to highlight on the idea that tools such as technology, financial capital, etc… cannot induce performance without the contribution of people in an organization, people are the "actors" that add value. Odrione (1987) mentioned that the key to success is by involving "other people on whom you are dependent, this dependence works best if all hands are similarly committed to a better future as defined by job objectives." (p.102) Savall (2003) in his opening speech at the conference "L'Université Citoyenne"

referred to François Perroux elaboration that the human potential steers the performance of the organization and helps to adapt to the internal and external environment. (p.9)

In this context, Collins (2001) has drawn a three circle framework ("the passion of actors, the best competency of actors, and the drives of their economic engine") that infuses core values of an organization while stimulating change.(p.203) The human potential could be developed through four different channels "communication, supportive environment from supervisor colleagues, employee empowerment, training and educating employees to cope with stress" (Tiong, 2005) However at organizations social loafing occurs. Mulvey, Veiga, and Elsass (1996) pointed out the reasons of social loafing and why managers "raise the white flag." One of the crucial reasons cited is that team members lack the confidence to contribute, and they are insignificant about some organization issues. From this perspective connecting employee's talents with the objectives of HEI will drive change and address the global challenges through innovation. (Cruz, 2009) Henri Savall affirms that only through the creativity of the actors companies can wipe out dysfunctions. (Worley et al., 2015, P.30)

2.3 The interlink between motivation & job enrichement

Herzberg's (1959), the guru of human motivation and job enrichment, explains through the Two-Factor Theory, the human needs in two sets. The first one includes the humans' essential needs, and it referred to as "hygiene factors" such as the reward system, and the salary which can generate dissatisfaction if they are not fulfilled. The second factor is the "growth needs" such as recognition of tasks accomplished, responsibility, and achievement; those factors will affect the motivation level of the staff. (Bess & et al., 2007) Pinder (1998) portrays motivation as:

> *"a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration."* (p.11)

On the other hand, Odrione (1987) stated that:

> *"Rather than talking of the motivation theories of Herzberg Mc Gregor, and Lickert trainers might better spend their time in simulating the behavior which is expected of people on the job."*(P.115)

Savall (1975-2010) advocates the need for job enrichment that motivates human, give them more responsibility, and enhance the outcomes of the organization.

3- HYPOTHESIS

Based on the above literature review focusing on the relation between change and employees empowerment, the research will highlight on the following core hypothesis. **H1: Engaging the administrative staff can help in avoiding the challenges imposed by the integration of accreditation at HEI and will leverage a participatory environment at HEI that will lessen the resistance to change.**

4-METHODOLOGY

The researchers followed the Intervention Research methodology more specifically the Qualimetrics methodology which is based on observations and interviews in a private University in the Gulf Region that the researchers referred to as University B. Intervention Research emerged in France from the classical Organization development methods such as case study (Yin,2003) and Action Science (Argyris, 1985, 1995).

Savall & Zardet (2004-2011) define Intervention Research as an **"interactive"** theory with a **"transformative**" objective, and has a goal of generating **"moments of creativity**" (p.31) through a **"co-produced knowledge."** In 1970, Henri Savall and ISEOR research team developed the Qualimetric Intervention-Research (QIR). QIR covers organizational, human and economic matters to release the untapped potentials, to identify the hidden cost of dysfunctions, and to energize the transformation phase (Savall & Zardet, 2014). Through Qualimtetrics innovative tools (Priority Action Plan, Internal External Strategic Action Plan, Competency Grid, Time management, The Strategic Piloting Logbook, Periodically Negotiable Activity Contract) and the "Horivert" process, all the actors will be involved. QIR is a beyond participative observation a top-down where top managers support the process of change and bottom-up process where all actors get engaged in the transformation process. (Conbere &Herohiadi, 2011) QIR is unique in its three- dimensional axes management tools, the process of improvement, and political and strategic decisions that are implemented by an intervener researcher. (Cappelletti &Baker, 2010)

The Qualitmetric Intervention approach is similar to case studies and Action Science. First, it is cyclical and combines action and reflection to change knowledge. The second mutual aspect is the collaboration among the participant and the researcher, to do research **'with'** people, rather than 'on' them. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) The third aspect in common is that most of the theories generate a scientific knowledge that can assist actions (Lallé, 2003) On the other hand, Lallé (2003) elucidates the unique perspective of Qualimetrics Intervention Research as a "transformative" whereas in Action Science is an interactive research. Moreover, QIR focuses on two goals: First, **"the empowerment of the actors, as co-researchers."** Second, **the creation of knowledge and action that is relevant to the participants.** Consequently, a Qualimetric Intervention not only stresses on the participatory aspects of Action Research but also addresses the financial and the strategic aspects within the organization. It focuses on "the description of the transformation phenomena" which will aid in creating solid findings (Savall et al., 2012).

From this perspective, the **characteristics** of the individual interviews as per the Qualimetrics method were:

- Semi-structured based on a forty- five friendly conversation.
- Anonymous and impersonal.
- Objective.
- Intervener listened rather than directly questioning.
- Guided by the six dysfunctions.
- Recorded by writing not taped without translation.
- Approved by the interviewee before treating it.

Ultimately, the interviews are **designed** to represent:
- An interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, so the data generated will be a reflection of the topic interviewed and the emotional and cultural aspect of the interviewee.
- A comprehensive and extensive involvement of all the organization actors.
- A higher degree of confidence among the interviewer and interviewee.

The analysis of the interviews allowed the researchers to extract a group of relatively explicative factors of occurrences at the University with an approach to tackle "thick description" of the social facts observed (Yin, 2003; Savall & Zardet, 2004-2011).

4.1 Field presentation

To examine the ontological perspectives of HEI staff engagement especially while integrating accreditation, the researchers intervened at University B a private University in the Kingdom of Bahrain founded in 2002 with one program and 144 students. Since then, the University has grown it is run by 45 administrative and faculty members, educates approximately 450 students, and offers various undergraduates and graduate programs. The top managers at University B describe its overall cultural profile as a constructive culture in which employees are encouraged to interact with others and achieve tasks in ways that increase sustainability and performance.

At the time, of the intervention research, the University to respond to the Higher Education Council (HEC) requirements and to maintain its position in the market was seeking national accreditation from HEC and was submitting the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) application to be listed by the National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training. Also, it has recently built a new strategic plan for the coming five years that focuses on quality of education, accreditation, and innovation.

4.2 Data collection

Ultimately, the first phase was choosing the field, observing the environment and determining the various key stakeholders. The second step was the negotiation phase to start the intervention. The negotiation during the intervention was a continuous process rather than at the commencement of the intervention. The researchers have begun with an informal meeting with the Chairman of the University B who revealed the latest challenges that are facing the University. Figure 1 below incorporates the interlink of the challenges facing University B due to the accreditation process, and the HEC regulations: building a strategic plan to recruit potential students, understanding, launching, mapping, managing, and incorporating the changes imposed from the invasion of new standards.

Figure 1 Chairman Narrative of University B Challenges
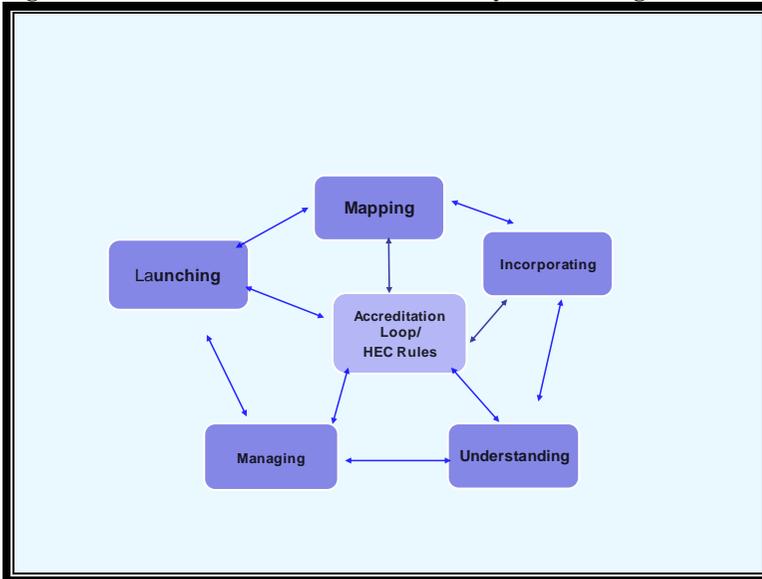
The role of a researcher intervener is to "widen the problematic" and involve all the University levels. (Savall & Zardet, 2004-2011) From this context, the researchers presented the intervention research approval agreement to the chairman. In the agreement letter, the researchers have highlighted on the settings, the objectives and the process of the intervention research. The agreement explained the anonymity parameters of the research to reassure respondents. (Rae & Sullivan, 2003)
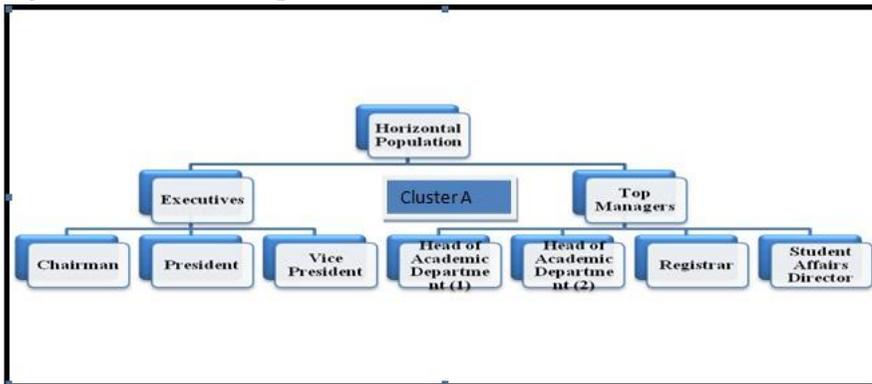
As a result of the first meeting with the chairman, his approval, and enthusiasm to intervene at University B the researchers have started their journey with the data collection following the Horivert approach and by sending emails to the targeted interviewee population to clarify the purpose of the interviews and to schedule the interviews. The aim of the Horivert approach that combines the top-down and bottom-up aspects of the University is to tackle the dysfunctions at all levels, present them to the top management and to launch a coherent and coordinated intervention. (Savall & Zardet, 1987-2008) In the QIR at University B, the researchers will carry out in-depth qualitative interviews at the horizontal, vertical level and quantitative interviews at the vertical level.

At the horizontal level, the researchers have conducted seven interviews with all the members of the University College Council. At the vertical level, the researchers only interviewed the persons that are interlinked with the marketing and public relation department at the University.

 Figure 2 below sketches the interviewed population as per the two clustered levels of the organization (Horizontal and Vertical) that we will divide into clusters A and B based on the University organizational chart and as agreed with the Chairman of the University. At the horizontal level, Cluster A will include all the members of the University College Council (UCC) which are the main contributors at the strategic level of the University and coordinate between the various administrative and academics departments. At the vertical level, cluster B

will include the Marketing and Public Relation Department Admission, Registration, and Student Affairs.

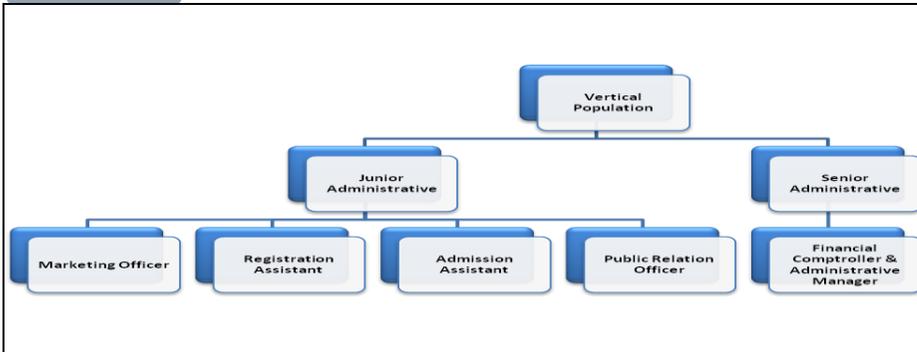**Figure 2 Interviewed Population (Cluster A & B)**

Table 1 presents a summary of the carried out qualitative interviews at the horizontal & vertical level indicating the category of the population, the type of interviews, the number of interviews and the number of the interviewee.

Table 1 Summary of Qualitative Interviews at the Horizontal and Vertical Level

| Qualitative Interviews			
Horizontal Diagnosis			
Category	**Number of Interviews**	**Number of Interviewee**	**Type of Interviews**
Executives	3	3	Individual
Top Managers	4	4	Individual
Vertical Diagnosis			
Category	**Number of Interviews**	**Number of Persons**	**Type of Interviews**
Junior Staff	4	4	Individual (3) & Focus (1)
Senior Administrative Staff	1	1	Individual

The aim was to listen to a wide number of people and to get them involved in the diagnosis phase. The variety of people interviewed helped the researchers to detect the root causes of the dysfunctions both at the "micro" and "macro" space of the University. The personnel interviews have eased the process of change and enhancement. The interviewers deliberated their thoughts and concerns openly. Rapley cited from Silverman (1993: 19) that "we are currently part of an interview society in which interviews seem central to making sense of our lives and produce our contemporary cultural experiences and knowledge of authentic personal. Interviews represent an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee so the data generated will be a reflection of the topic interviewed and the emotional and cultural aspect of the interviewee. (Seale & Gobo, 2002)

4.3 Data treatment

Senge (1990) defines organizations as "learning organization where collective aspirations are set free, and where people are continually learning to learn together." (p.3-4) The QIR diagnostic at University B will translate the actors' voices into a living "experience" (Savall et al., 2000-2008, p.153) that will be reshaped and evolved to secure a sustainable foundation.
Figure 3 illustrates the classification of the four stages of the data treatment. (Savall & Zardet, 2004-2011, p.288) First, the selection of the field note quotes, second the classification of the field note quotes by subthemes grouped by themes (the six main dysfunctions), third the generation of key ideas and fourth the calculation of the frequencies.

Figure 3 Classification of the Data Treatment
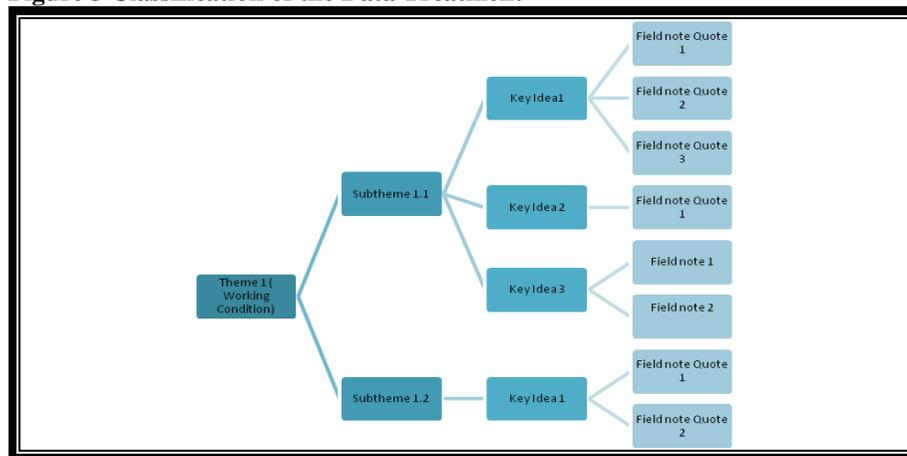
Retrieved from Savall, H., & Zardet, V., (2004-2011) ISEOR© 2004-2011
While decoding the witness statements, the researchers weighted the key ideas by assigning frequencies relative to the number of responses which will help at a later stage in the diagnosis and implementation of tools.
Figure 4 highlights on the descriptive statistics (number of interviews, time spent on interviews, field note quotes, themes, subthemes and key ideas) of the

horizontal and vertical data treatment classification at University B. The interviews generated: 5 vertical interviews and 7 horizontal interviews, a total of 18.2 hours of interviews, narrative of 157 witness statements at the horizontal level, 101 at the vertical level; 85 key ideas at the horizontal level, 19 at the vertical level, an average of 36 subthemes, and 6 themes (the working conditions, work organization, communication coordination cooperation, time management, integrated training, and strategic implementation).

Figure 4 Descriptive Statistics of the Data Treatment
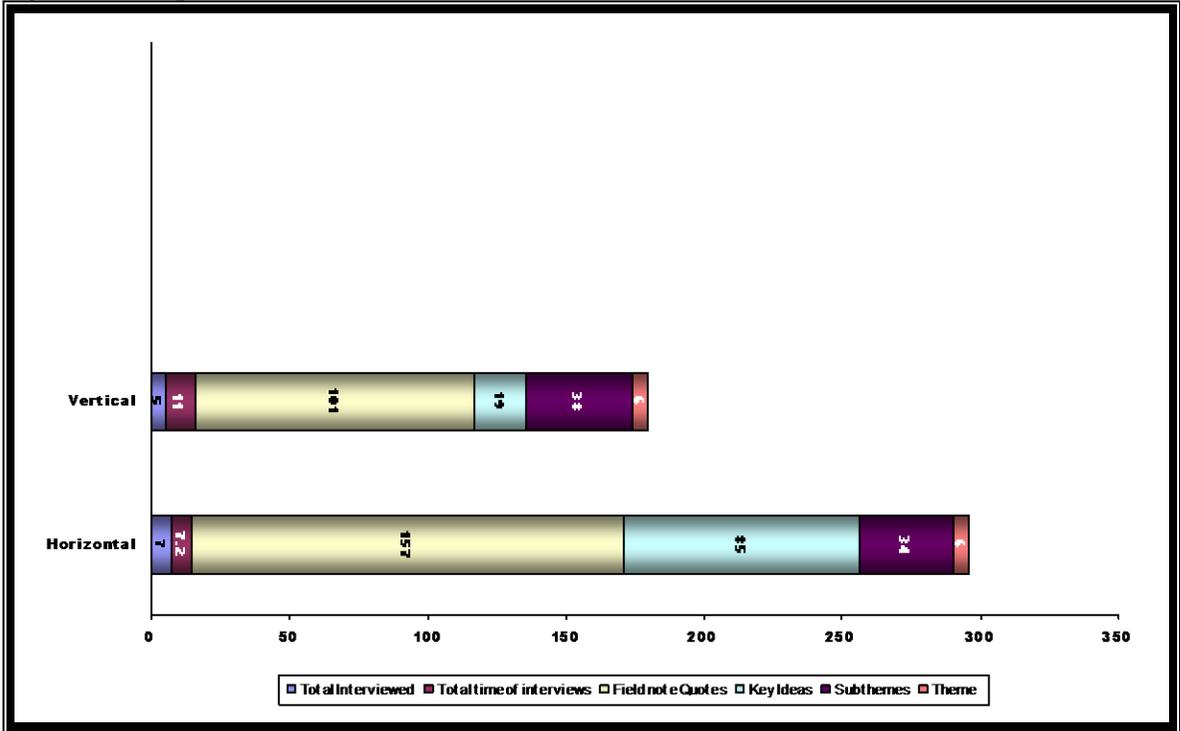
Figures 5 and 6 indicate the frequencies of the field notes quoted relative to the main six themes of dysfunctions at the horizontal and vertical level. Hence, the frequencies reflect at the horizontal and vertical level that the main themes that University B should look after are the strategic implementation and the work organization. At the vertical level, the work organization and strategic implementation included the highest percentage of witness statement 31 % each. Similar at the horizontal level, the strategic implementation incorporates 20 % of the witness statements whereas the working organization 26 % of the total statements.

Figure 5 Frequencies of 157 Field Notes Quotes at the Horizontal Level as per the Six Themes of Dysfunctions
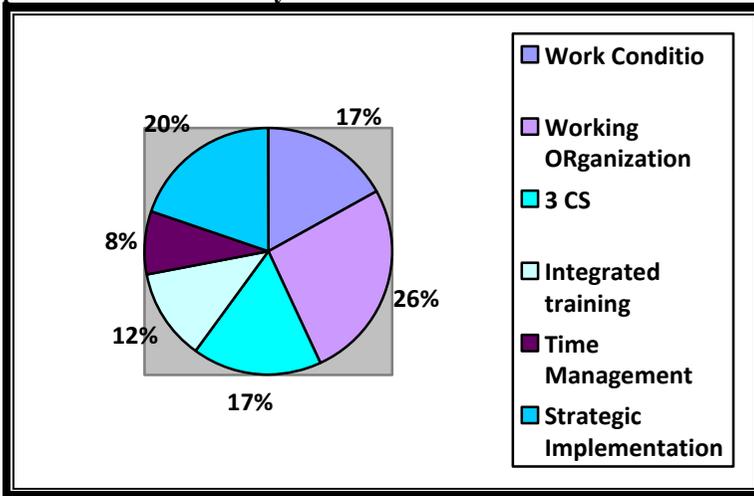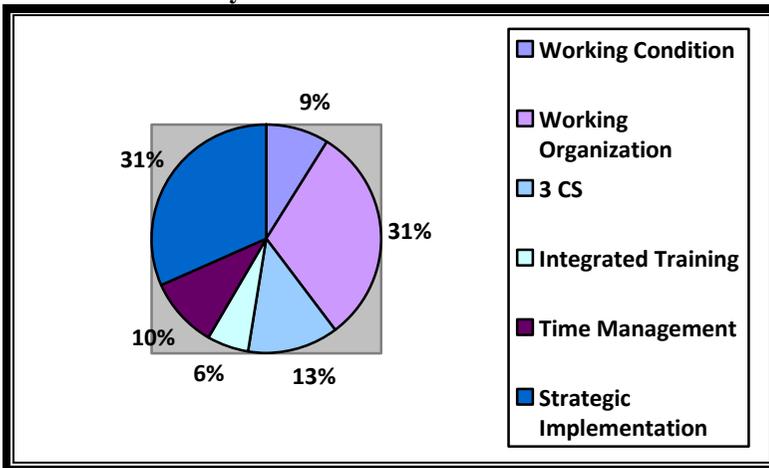

Figure 6 Frequencies of 101 Field Notes Quotes at the Vertical Level as per the Six Themes of Dysfunctions

4.4-Tools applied: priority action plan &competency grid

In the previous paragraph, the researchers shed light on the "Qualitative information," the actor's opinions and raised the awareness to foster a participative improvement project that will be tackled in two unique tools: the Priority Action Plan that is conducted each half year to sorts and tracks the activities depending on their value added level, and to improves the teamwork spirit within the departments of the University. The Competency Grid highlights on the level of skills of employees in various operations by understanding the levels of competency, the management will get the needed sketches to redesign the jobs among the actors.

4.4.1 Priority action plan

The researchers assigned a project leader to synchronize the derived objectives of the University through the PAP, to assign the actions to the appropriate departments for monitoring and performing, and forecast the duration of each action accordingly. Consequently, the project leader with the help of the various actors of the University prepared the PAP. The synchronization of actions and involvement of the various actors in the PAP accentuates on Cappalletti's (2009) model of internal management control that "coordinates organizational strategy with internal control objectives with the full support of a company's board of directors, synchronization by a steering committee and direct involvement of all managers." For this reason, a high degree of communication occurred between the various levels of the University to derive the various objectives. Ultimately, the represented PAP traced the pillars that the University should align with their built structure and system: **Upgrading the current Information System, involving all the stakeholders in the review of the mission, enhancing the communication among the departments.** Also, it has demonstrated the importance of the strategizing characteristic of the "built to change model" (Worley & Lawler, 2010) and the Qualimetrics "model of agility and performance." (Zardet& Bonnet, 2016) Therefore by involving the actors in the main strategic objectives of the University, the root causes of the dysfunctions will be recycled through the corrective actions. Hence, the University, cultural discipline will be retuned through its actors and the assigned actions to remedy the dysfunctions. The researchers and the University staff noticed that the priority actions plans helped the University in sketching the goals to integrate the accreditation and prepare the actors to adapt to the changes imposed by the new standards.

4.4.2 Competency grid

Hackman & Oldham (1980) defined the core job characteristics, and the related psychological states that will affect the work output. For instance, the Autonomy is linked to experienced responsibility for work outcomes and will generate a high quality performance, high satisfaction with the work, low absenteeism, and high motivation. (Bess & et al., 2007) Therefore, identifying the various skills of the actors will incorporate the structure of the overall task of the University employees. In this context, the researchers conducted a Competency Grid to underpin in a systematic way the available skills of the actors that are performing the activities related to the accreditation process. The aim of the Competency Grid is to mainly design the training vision for the staff and to delegate activities between the actors. Also, it will analyze the level of weaknesses in the daily activities and will be a guiding principle in the development of operations, and illustrates the knowledge of the actors (the admission assistant, student affairs officer, Public relation and marketing officer) in the daily activities, the development operations, and their specific know-how. Hence, the grid will simulate the University to transform the current structure of the employees and manipulate their behavior. The competency grid was drawn by the project leader, and it was based on three characteristics "rigor, confidence, and courage."(Savall & Zardet, 1987-2008) Horizontally the grid determined the

level of skills of each actor and vertically the weakness level of the performed activities as per the group of the actors. The researcher along with the University employees derived from the illustrated competency grid the integrated training needed. Also, the skills scale of the actors and each activity scale reflected on the strategic decisions of the University to implement the new standards imposed by the accreditation. Ultimately, all the actors should be trained on the new management information system, and should be aware of the accreditation standards. The competency grid has drawn the strategic piloting of the human potential to create a long-term sustainability for the University.

5. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Synchronization & orchestration

Rational coordination and synchronization of human tasks are always considered as a dilemma in organizations. (Clegg & Baiely, 2007) Buono & Savall (2007) highlighted that through a high level of communication the actors would be empowered to overcome constraints while integrating changes. Senge (1990) emphasized that dialogue promotes ''the free and creative exploration of complex and subtle' issues'' (p.237). The stories of the actors echoed the importance of synchronization to enhance the integration of the accreditation standards which reflects the core hypothesis: **Engaging the administrative staff can help in avoiding the challenges imposed by the integration of accreditation at HEI and will leverage a participatory environment at HEI that will lessen the resistance to change.**

The PAP reflected the need to improve the communication among the various departments of the University; the competency grid demonstrated the importance of delegation of tasks. Hence, this broad-spectrum emphasizes the importance of synchronized decentralization and integration among actors during change. Savall (1975-2010) stressed that while planning change the company should focus on three dimensions: "solidarity, responsibility, and personalization." (p.164). Ultimately, University B through the redesigning of the committees to involve the various stakeholders will obtain a new synchronized platform and reinforce the solidarity aspect. This platform will help the University to integrate the accreditation standards since it will make it easier for actors to communicate, to find the information that they need. Also, redesigning the distribution of tasks will lead to job enrichment; accordingly the actors will accomplish with a higher responsibility and awareness any task from recruiting new students, assessing programs and services to establishing academic and administrative policies. The monthly meeting of the committees will improve the "inter-personal relationships," and will ease the flow and quality of communication leading to a higher degree of personalization. In addition, the synergy among the actors will facilitate the planning for aligning the accreditation standard. For instance, the PAP will guide the actors to achieve "Standard 1: Mission, Impact, Innovation" (AACSB, 2013) by drawing the expected outcomes and financing activities related to the overall University mission. Such a planning approach will aid the people to be active in accepting the integration of the accreditation standards, will drive them to move forward, and will lead to clarity to the needed tasks. To

wrap up, Table 2 presents the main improvement actions due to the synergy of tasks at three categories working conditions, work organization, and integrated training.

Table 2 Improvement Actions

Dysfunctions Category	Improved Actions
Working Conditions	Creating Committees that involve all the departments aligns the various activities of the University and synchronizes the tasks.
Work Organization	Tasks are delegated between the marketing and admission department, also between the faculty and staff members during the accreditation process.
Integrated Training	The University staff gained knowledge in the accreditation process. A quality and accreditation officer was appointed to integrate the accreditation standards within the University identity

5.2 Cleaning up

HEI complex environment is affected by the "pollution phenomena" (Savall & Zardet, 1987-2008, p.204) the changes in the University strategy to map the invasion of accreditation needs, the changes in the staff commitment and contribution, and an increase of work tasks to be accomplished. So to prevent the pollution effect, HEI have to more effectively treat and recycle their hidden cost. The PAP generated at University B tailored the strategies that should be designed and integrated. In line with Hayman and Giles (2015) statement "that through the mission, ideas are translated into a practical purpose", the PAP strategic axes cleaned up and determined the priority actions that will, for instance, solve the student recruitment plan during the accreditation process.

Table 3 below emphasizes on the first part of the cleaning up of some of the dysfunctions after the execution of the first PAP at the horizontal level. The first column of the table includes the polluted actions that will be segregated in the second column of the table to enhanced actions that will design a flexible and agile environment in order to alter a sustainable performance.

Table 3 Segregation of Polluted Actions to Enhanced Actions

| Polluted Actions	• Enhanced Actions
Deficiency in the archiving mechanism	• Easy and online access to multiple data related to the marketing department
Lack to Assess the best marketing stream	• Engaged Marketing Stream • A robust marketing plan
Delay and time consuming while tracking the marketing leads	• Speeding up the data collection (such as students Leads) • Automating the reports generation
Partial Communication between marketing and admission department	• Monthly meetings • Restructuring of marketing and committee to include a representative from the concerned departments

5.3 Aligning the university structure and actors behavior

The complex interaction between actor's behavior and the company structure is one of the root causes that generate "**ortho-functions and dysfunction.**" (Savall & Zardet, 1987-2008)

Savall and Zardet (1987-2008) define the behavior of actors as *"the observed human action that has an incidence on the physical and social environment"* and determine the four factors that cause the behavior of a person:

- *"the individual's characteristics,*
- *the structural characteristics*
- *the individual's environment*
- *The individual's personal chrono-biology and the environment's conjuncture phenomena." (p. 13-14)*

Also, they refer to the link between behaviors and structures as "an alteration of asymmetrical relations between structures and behaviors" as drawn in the following equation:

© From Savall & Zardet, 1987-2008, p.14
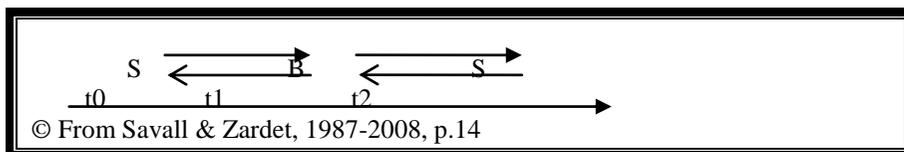
Hence in the QIR at University B, the researchers aimed at finding the gaps in the alignment of the actor's behavior with the integral quality of the University that induced dysfunctions. The competency grid illustration that some actors possess the skills but are not efficiently achieving the tasks and on the other hand some tasks are poorly assumed due to lack of competencies emphasized on the derived core hypothesis of engaging administrative staff and the need for a facilitator to define the new standards among the staff

Odiorne (1987) noted that to achieve "future integration" companies have to gain "a steady infusion of competencies.(p.110) The jobs classification of the employees at the marketing, admission, registration and public relation departments into three zones as illustrated in Figure 7 helped the researchers to identify the existing competencies and determine the integrated training needed. Zone A represents the available competencies, Zone B includes the training sphere (the existing competencies of the employees that are not mobilized by the jobs), and Zone C includes the poorly assumed tasks due to the lack of skills or experience in the activities.

Figure 7 Job Classification as per Three Zones
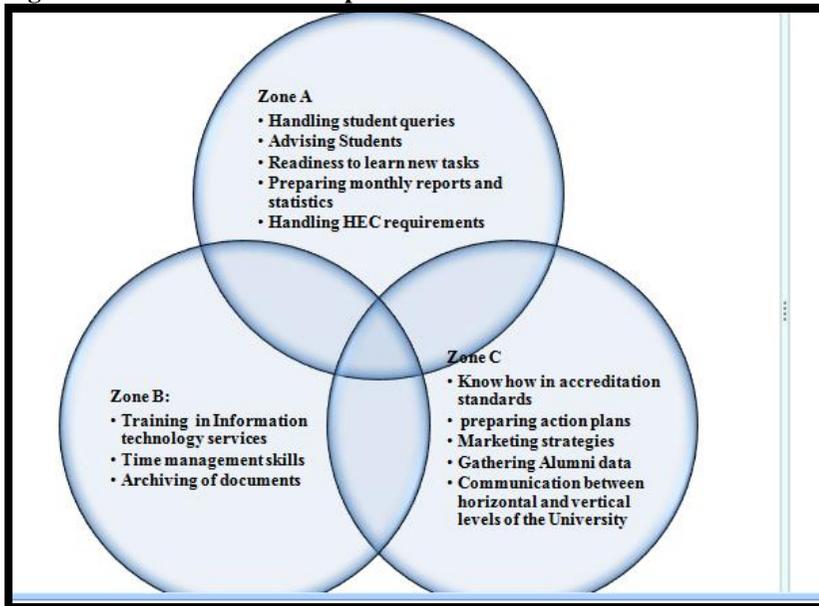
Adapted from Savall, H. & Zardet, V. (1987-2008)

As a result, the classification of jobs as per the competency grid illustration triggered the framework that will enhance the competency of the employees at the University specifically the ones performing the marketing, admission, and registration tasks. For instance, as mentioned in zone C the actors should acquire expertise in the various accreditation standards. Table 4 below summarizes the improvement and enrichment of the employees due to the socio-economic project results. The improvement includes long-term and immediate actions that will

ease the integration of the accreditation in the daily activities of the marketing and admission department.

Table 4 Competencies Improvement

From the above table, the researchers can conclude that the activities of the employees will be more targeted and effective especially while recruiting students.

6- RECOMMENDATIONS

In the core hypothesis, the researchers have expressed the challenges that face HEI while integrating the accreditation process: How to enhance the human potential to reshape and align the mission and the objectives of the University. The comprehensive tools applied in the intervention research at University B tackled those challenges and monitored social and economic control of the overall performance of University B while integrating the accreditation process. Corrective actions are usually costly but have a high return investment and various qualitative and quantitative gains. In this section, the researchers will recommend a mini-diagnosis for involving the administrative staff in the accreditation process and present the impact on three levels qualitative, quantitative and financial. In this context, the researchers recommend engaging the administrative staff through:

- Allocating resources
- Training for administrators in accreditation process
- Assigning an Accreditation and Continuous Improvement Coordinator to mobilize the accreditation process

- Assigning four accreditation committees each committee responsible for completing two areas out of the eight areas required by the National Institutional Accreditation (HEC Accreditation Handbook, 2016)
- All departments represented in each committee
- Weekly meetings for each committee to update on the accreditation progress

To sense the Qualimetric gain from the above diagnosis, the researchers will draw first an economic balance figure 8 highlighting on the return on investment from first the training cost in the accreditation standards and second recruiting a coordinator to mobilize the accreditation process. The total cost of the recommended corrective actions is around 28000 $ however it will generate an overall provision outcome of around 10000 $ since it will reduce the hidden cost by 24380 $ and create an added value of 14000 $.

Figure 8 Recommended Economic Balance

COSTS		BENEFITS	
COST INCREASE Training & Development on Accreditation Standards: Local Seminars (4 persons) International Conferences per year (2 persons) 2500 $ per person per year Recruitment of Accreditation Coordinator	1000 5000 22000	BENEFIT INCREASE Increase in the know-How of Accreditation requirements (Less paper work)	
	28,000$		+14,000
Better Coordination among departments to collect the documentation required for the accreditation application Reporting qualitative and quantitative data related to accreditation is more organized. Data is properly archived	11300 $ 4200 $ 8880 $		
	-24380 $		
OVERALL COSTS	3620 $	OVERALL BENEFITS	14000 $

PROVISIONAL OUTCOME OF THE PROJECT: 10380 $ ©Iseor 1977 Maj: 23/02/2015

From the above corrective action and economic balance, the researchers derived various Qualimetrics findings. Table 5 will summarize the expected gains at three levels qualitative, quantitative and financial.

Table 5 Qualimetric Findings for recommended Action

Concrete Actions	Elementary dysfunctions	Cost of Dysfunction	Forecast of Hidden Cost	Gains		
				Qualitative	**Quantitative**	**Financial $**
Assigning a Coordinator to Follow up the accreditation documentation &Conducting various Training in the accreditation process	The reports needed for the accreditation application are not centralized, documents are distributed in various departments	14,208	80 %	Better Coordination among departments to collect the documentation required for the accreditation application	2 staff member will use only half an hour per day to coordinate among departments	11,300
	Inflow comes from top managers for tasks to be done and the communication for action plan takes 2 hours per week	8400	50 %	Reporting qualitative and quantitative data related to accreditation is more organized.	The time spent to communicate and give guidelines for action plans will be reduced by one hour per week.	4200
	Archiving of Data and handling over	8880	100 %	Data is properly archived	Staff will allocate the 2.5 hr that was usually spent on re collecting data to other productive activities	8880

7- LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

Even though the research is limited to one University and one country; it will open the door to further scientific studies at other HEI in the region that face similar challenges by applying Qualimetrics tools. Moreover, there are various aspects in HEI that are not covered in this research, and that can be explored in future researches such as the role of the academic staff and the conflicts that can arise between them and the administrative staff. In addition, the researchers unlocked the mystery of the minimal core hypothesis of identifying a

strategic plan to enhance the human potential in order to easily integrate the accreditation standards within the identity of the University. However a maximum hypothesis of ensuring that the values and aspirations of the staff are maintained and performed while integrating the accreditation was not fully covered which will lead to further discussions and debates.

8-CONCLUSION

Integrating new standards is described as "tetranormalization" which requires from the actors to "play with the game rules" (Savall& Zardet, 2005-2013). Regardless of the limitations, the QIR at University B has detected "the formation, deformation, and transformation of the game rules" to adapt to the different poles of accreditation. (Savall& Zardet, 2005-2013) In this context, the QIR at University B has shed light how through nurturing the actors with accreditation skills, designing committees that involve at least on representative from each department and appointing a new coordinator that will mobilize and empower all the actors, University B will experience a smooth integration of the accreditation standards. Also, it has proved that to successfully integrate accreditation or any other quality certification the rule is the "mask dissimulating the hidden facets" of accreditation standards should not be more prevailing than the overall enhancement the standards will generate, (Savall& Zardet, 2005-2013) therefore it is the quality of integration that increases the sustainability. As a conclusion, during the intervention the researchers experienced that through understanding the management system of the University and boosting the human potential change needs will be adaptable.

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