



## Assessment of the degree of application of American educational programs accreditation standards in a developing country

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### Suggested Citation:

Al-Omari, J.F. (2025). Assessment of the degree of application of American educational programs accreditation standards in a developing country. *Contemporary Educational Research Journal*, 15(3), 137-147. <https://doi.org/10.18844/cerj.v15i3.9818>

Received from January 12, 2025; revised from March 12, 2025; accepted from July 03, 2025.

Selection and peer review under the responsibility of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Deniz Ozcan, Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University, Turkey.

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### Abstract

This study investigates faculty members' assessments of the degree of application of Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standards in a college of education, considering the variables of specialization and academic rank. Adopting a descriptive survey design, data were collected through a questionnaire administered to a cluster random sample of 68 faculty members. Results indicate significant differences in the perceived degree of CAEP standards application based on specialization, while no differences were observed based on academic rank. The findings suggest that specialization influences faculty perspectives on accreditation compliance, whereas academic hierarchy does not play a substantial role. Recommendations include presenting accreditation requirements clearly in alignment with CAEP standards, conducting regular meetings and distributing relevant publications at the start of each academic year, and implementing exploratory studies to align programs with societal needs and future aspirations. These measures are expected to enhance accreditation readiness and improve program quality within colleges of education.

**Keywords:** Academic rank; accreditation; CAEP standards; faculty perception; specialization.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Universities occupy the pinnacle of the educational hierarchy within society, fulfilling a vital role in the development of human capital. This mission is realized through the preparation of future national cadres endowed with intellectual capability, practical skills, and a sense of belonging. From these educated youths emerge community leaders across various scientific, economic, social, political, cultural, and administrative domains, thereby driving continuous societal advancement and development. Universities actively strive to strengthen their engagement with their respective communities, ensuring that higher education remains closely intertwined with the lives, challenges, needs, and aspirations of individuals. The primary objective of universities is to promote societal progress by elevating all fields to their highest potential. One significant global development in the early twenty-first century has been the emphasis on delivering higher education that aligns with established standards of excellence, quality assurance, and academic accreditation.

In the context of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment defines accreditation as an official certification awarded by an authorized entity that verifies an educational program or institution meets specified standards. Accreditation is categorized into two main forms: institutional academic accreditation, which evaluates the entire educational institution, and programmatic academic accreditation, which assesses specific academic programs.

Accordingly, academic accreditation may be understood as a systematic evaluation process aimed at verifying that an educational institution (institutional accreditation) or academic program (programmatic accreditation) complies with the standards set forth by the accrediting body. This process follows prescribed procedures, culminating in the formal granting of accreditation to the institution or program (Saeed et al., 2021; Albaroudi et al., 2025).

Institutional accreditation focuses on the comprehensive evaluation of the entire institution based on predefined criteria. It ensures institutional recognition as a cohesive entity, and upon successful verification of these standards, it facilitates the transition to programmatic accreditation as part of the broader institutional accreditation framework. This type of accreditation guarantees the presence of a robust organizational foundation and structural framework for educational activities and grants preliminary or initial certification to the institution as a fully operational entity (Badawi, 2012).

Academic or programmatic accreditation is conferred after the institution attains initial accreditation. It is not awarded until at least one year after the first cohort has graduated, allowing for comprehensive evaluation and thorough review of all aspects related to the study programs. These include faculty qualifications, experience, research productivity, student enrollment and performance in periodic and final examinations, and the availability of diverse learning resources (Al-Thaqafi, 2009; Al-Harbi, 2011; Almurayh et al., 2022).

Several Saudi public universities, including King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, and King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, began implementing quality assurance mechanisms in their academic programs during the late twentieth century. This implementation was often in collaboration with international institutions to adopt programs in specialized professional disciplines. By the mid-1990s, universities such as King Abdulaziz University established quality control centers, which later evolved into deanships for academic development, as seen in King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals. At the beginning of the current century, Saudi Arabia adopted a comprehensive strategy to regulate and enhance higher education through initiatives such as the National Center for Measurement and Evaluation and the establishment of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment. Founded by royal decree from the Higher Education Council in 1424 AH, this commission possesses legal, administrative, and financial independence under the council's supervision. It is entrusted with overseeing academic accreditation for all higher education institutions, excluding military education, to enhance the quality and transparency of both public and private higher education and to establish standardized academic performance criteria (Kharabsheh, 2012).

Academic accreditation standards vary internationally, influenced by the foundational objectives of accreditation bodies as well as the socio-cultural context of each country. Moreover, nearly two decades following the establishment of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment in 2004, empirical evidence from academic stakeholders indicates that accreditation has substantially contributed to the improvement of higher education quality in Saudi Arabia, notwithstanding some tensions between faculty members and policymakers concerning external quality assurance processes (Bougherira & Elasmara, 2023). The National Commission formulated eleven standards for assessing academic quality and accreditation applicable to both institutions and programs, although their implementation varies depending on the evaluation type. These standards are organized into five categories, each encompassing specific requirements, performance indicators, and evidentiary criteria. The commission's standards serve as the foundation for ensuring the quality and accreditation of higher education institutions and academic programs across the Kingdom (National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment, 2011; Alzghaibi, 2024; Mohamed et al., 2024).

### **1.1. Conceptual framework**

The CAPE standards are considered relatively recent, as the council was established in early 2013 and began implementing its standards in 2016. CAPE was created to replace NCATE and TEAC, two prominent global bodies for accrediting educational programs in teacher preparation. The council has outlined six principal objectives, including elevating quality thresholds for teacher education programs, fostering advancement and excellence in teacher preparation, encouraging educational research and innovation to facilitate continuous enhancement of educational programs, and serving as a model accreditation authority for educational institutions worldwide. Below is a succinct overview of these standards.

The first criterion, educational content and knowledge, emphasizes ensuring that students develop a profound comprehension of fundamental concepts and facts related to their field of specialization. It also requires that students grasp the underlying principles that form the foundation of their discipline, and that they acquire the competencies necessary to apply best practices in their specialty upon graduation, thus enhancing student learning outcomes. This criterion encompasses several indicators: the demonstration of task integration in program curricula across areas such as learner development, learning processes, content mastery, teaching practices, and professional responsibility; graduates' utilization of research and scientific evidence to comprehend teaching methodologies and to assess student learning progress; application of educational content as reflected in learning outcome evaluations aligned with specialized professional association standards; possession of advanced skills as outlined by frameworks such as the Science Generation Standards and the National Certificate for Professions; and the inclusion and application of technology standards in designing learning experiences. This criterion further contains ten detailed sub-criteria.

The second criterion pertains to professional partnerships and vocational training. It underscores the importance of collaborations involving high-caliber supervisors during field training, with emphasis on mutual benefit between public education institutions and partners. Such partnerships are involved in the selection, preparation, and evaluation of field training programs and collaborate in designing field exercises that are sufficiently comprehensive and diverse.

The third criterion addresses the quality of student recruitment and selection processes. The program bears responsibility for maintaining quality standards regarding student admission, progression through their courses, and eventual graduation. This responsibility is realized through measures such as developing employment plans and graduate support, establishing admission criteria, monitoring student characteristics and behaviors beyond academic performance, setting progression standards, documenting evidence of standards being met concerning content delivery, and ensuring students understand expected requirements.

The fourth criterion examines the program's impact, particularly regarding graduates' influence on student learning and development in general education. Evaluation methods include applying specific metrics to assess

learning outcomes, utilizing codified observation tools and feedback from students in public education to measure teaching effectiveness, identifying indicators of instructional success, and gauging graduate satisfaction through standardized instruments.

The fifth criterion concerns program quality assurance and continuous improvement. The program must operate a quality assurance system that integrates data from various sources, including graduate evaluations and research findings, to identify priorities and foster ongoing enhancement of graduates' impact on student learning within general education. This represents a broad summary of the CAPE standards.

The researcher reviewed numerous studies addressing the implementation of academic accreditation standards. For example, Al-Ghamdi et al. (2024) examined obstacles to applying institutional academic accreditation standards at Taibah University, finding moderate challenges in teaching and learning, scientific research, and institutional community engagement. While no significant differences were found based on faculty affiliation, differences emerged related to academic rank, favoring associate professors across these domains.

Al-Otaibi (2015) investigated accreditation standards for educational programs as outlined by an American accreditation organization. The study revealed complementarity between practices fulfilling the standards of the National Authority for Education Evaluation and the CAPE standards, suggesting that colleges meeting multiple academic, educational, and administrative benchmarks could achieve both local and international accreditation.

Al-Mutawa (2014), in his study on obstacles to academic accreditation and quality assurance for educational programs at Shaqra University's College of Sciences and Humanities, identified major challenges from faculty perspectives. Employing a descriptive survey with a randomly selected cluster sample, the study highlighted thesis development and university review processes as the primary barriers, followed by insufficient material and moral incentives for faculty members.

Al-Worathan and Zaki (2013) explored impediments to quality achievement and academic accreditation at Shaqra University. Their descriptive study of a stratified random sample of faculty members indicated that scientific research barriers were paramount, followed by organizational challenges such as inadequate financial and moral incentives, weak interdepartmental communication, and insufficient training for implementation. Educational and cognitive issues also emerged, including low-quality culture among students, inadequate mechanisms to foster knowledge development, and reliance on rote learning. Finally, leadership challenges included a lack of infrastructure support, ambiguity regarding accreditation application among leaders, and unclear implementation strategies.

Schmadeka's (2012) study on the evaluation of academic accreditation of over three thousand regional colleges in the United States underscored the importance of transparency in demonstrating institutional status as a critical factor in achieving accreditation. The study relied on institutional documents, reports, and data necessary for accreditation.

## **1.2. Research problem**

Collectively, these studies highlight numerous obstacles to attaining both institutional and programmatic academic accreditation, underscoring the urgency of overcoming such challenges. Accordingly, this research aims to identify the specific obstacles faced by Taibah University in applying program accreditation standards by addressing the primary question: How do faculty members at the College of Education at Taibah University evaluate the extent of implementation of the American Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standards?

Most universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia strive to achieve both institutional and programmatic academic accreditation through the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment. Academic accreditation in the Kingdom began following the establishment of this commission in 1424 AH (Ministry of Higher Education, 1434 AH). To evaluate the extent to which colleges of education fulfill their objectives, it is necessary

to assess various aspects of their operations based on specific criteria. Consequently, applying programmatic academic accreditation has become an urgent priority, serving as a hallmark of trustworthiness for universities, enhancing their competitive advantage, and reflecting their overall performance in society.

Despite these imperatives, the College of Education at Taibah University has yet to obtain programmatic academic accreditation from any national or international body. This contrasts with other universities founded in the same period, such as Qassim University, which achieved accreditation as early as 2008 (ABET, 2014). This gap suggests the presence of obstacles hindering the College of Education at Taibah University from securing programmatic accreditation.

In general, educational programs at Saudi universities face notable challenges when compared to their international counterparts. This is evident from the analysis of university students' success rates in capability tests within educational specializations over the past three years, as documented in various studies (Al-Ibrahim, 2010; Burke & Butler, 2012; Ibrahim, 2013). These studies underscore the critical importance of implementing programmatic academic accreditation standards in Saudi universities. Several investigations have also examined the obstacles confronting universities in their pursuit of academic accreditation (Al-Mutawa, 2014; Al-Worthan & Al-Zaki, 2013; Al-Harbi, 2011).

Furthermore, Faculties of Education in Saudi Arabia are currently awaiting new regulations concerning the mechanisms for teacher preparation. A committee comprising representatives from the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and several deans of Faculties of Education has been formed to address this matter. This development necessitates a reevaluation of the mission and programs of these faculties, requiring them to align with international standards. Given that Saudi Arabia currently lacks national standards for the accreditation of educational programs, any educational college in the Kingdom must seek programmatic accreditation from recognized international bodies.

In this context, the College of Education at Taibah University aims to obtain programmatic accreditation from the American Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Achieving this accreditation is deemed necessary, if not essential, for securing a competitive edge and attaining recognized international classifications. CAEP is widely regarded as the most specialized and prestigious body for accrediting educational programs, combining the strengths of its predecessor organizations, NCATE and TEAC. Obtaining CAEP accreditation would distinguish the College of Education at Taibah University from other colleges regionally and internationally.

Moreover, the demands of the knowledge society and knowledge economy necessitate that college graduates remain abreast of global scientific developments, a goal facilitated by international accreditation. The accreditation process itself also contributes to a rigorous evaluation of the college's outputs and quality, thereby supporting continuous improvement (Al-Ghamdi et al., 2024; Al-Otaibi, 2015). Notably, no Faculty of Education in the Arab world has yet secured CAEP accreditation, underscoring the significance of this endeavor and the need for Faculties of Education to reform their programs to achieve enhanced quality.

### **1.3. Purpose of study**

Therefore, this research seeks to evaluate the extent to which the College of Education at Taibah University applies the CAEP standards by addressing the following questions:

RQ1- How do faculty members perceive the degree of application of CAEP standards in the College of Education at Taibah University?

RQ2- Are there statistically significant differences in faculty members' responses regarding the degree of application of CAEP standards based on their academic specialization and rank?

The purpose of this study is to assess the degree of implementation of the American Educational Programs Accreditation Authority (CAEP) standards in the College of Education at a developing country, using the faculty members' perspectives as the primary evaluative lens.

## 2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

### 2.1. Research model

This study employed a descriptive survey approach to evaluate the degree of application of the American Educational Programs Accreditation Authority (CAEP) standards at the College of Education, Taibah University, from the perspective of faculty members.

### 2.2. Participants

The research population consisted of all faculty members at the College of Education, Taibah University, totaling 280 members (Ministry of Higher Education, 1436 AH). A cluster random sample representing 24% of the population was selected, comprising 68 faculty members from various departments and academic ranks during the second semester of the academic year 1437/1438 AH. The sample distribution covered professors, associate professors, and assistant professors across the Departments of Curriculum and Teaching, Educational Administration, Foundations of Education, and Psychology.

Table (1) shows the distribution of the research sample according to For my two variables: major and academic rank:

**Table 1**

*Distribution of the research sample according to the variables of specialization and academic rank*

Department	professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor
Department of Curriculum and Teaching	10	10	17
Department of Educational Administration	4	9	3
Department of Foundations of Education	2	4	2
Department of Psychology	1	4	4
Total	68		

### 2.3. Data collection tool

A structured questionnaire was developed based on an extensive review of related literature and previous studies. The questionnaire consisted of two parts:

- The first part gathered respondents' personal data and research variables (department, academic rank).
- The second part measured the application of CAEP accreditation standards across five domains: educational content and knowledge, professional partnership and field training, student quality, program impact, and program quality assurance.

Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to assess the degree of application of each standard.

### 2.4. Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of 10 arbitrators from the College of Education faculty at Taibah University (Table 2). Their feedback was incorporated to refine the instrument.

**Table 2**

*Vocabulary of the search tool in its final form*

The degree of application of CAEP standards		N
	Educational content and knowledge	10
	Practice professional partnership and field	10
	Student quality	10
	The impact of the program	10
	Program quality assurance	10
	Total phrases	50

The internal consistency was confirmed by calculating Pearson correlation coefficients between individual items, domains, and the overall tool, all showing statistically significant correlations ( $p < 0.01$ ) with values between 0.81 and 0.86.

The tool's reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a high value of 0.96, indicating excellent stability and internal consistency.

## 2.5. Data collection procedures

Data collection took place during the second semester of the 1437/1438 AH academic year. Approval was obtained from the College of Education administration, and the electronic questionnaire was distributed to faculty members via email. Respondents were given two weeks to complete the survey, after which data were collected, coded, and prepared for analysis.

## 2.6. Data analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed to determine the degree of application of CAEP standards. Additionally, analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to explore differences related to the research variables, such as department and academic rank.

## 3. RESULTS

This aspect deals with a presentation, discussion, analysis, and interpretation of the results of field research, and the following are presented:

### 3.1. The answer to the first question: How do faculty members perceive the degree of application of CAEP standards in the College of Education at Taibah University?

To answer this question, the researcher used the averages and standard deviations to identify the assessment of the degree of application of the standards of the American Educational Programs Accreditation Authority (CAEP) in the College of Education at Taibah University from the viewpoint of the faculty members, as shown in Table 3:

**Table 3**

*The general arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the five criteria.*

Ranking	standard	M	SD	Grade score
1	Educational content	3,64	0,91	medium
2	Practice professional	3,55	1.00	medium
3	Student quality	3,15	1.06	medium
4	The impact of the	3,11	0,90	medium
5	Program quality assurance	3,22	0,75	medium
Overall Average		3,64	0,91	medium

The overall arithmetic mean of the faculty members' perceptions regarding the extent of implementation of the American Educational Programs Accreditation Authority (CAEP) standards in the College of Education at Taibah University indicated a moderate level of application across all domains. The highest rated domain was the first criterion, educational content and knowledge, which achieved a mean score of 3.64. This was followed by the second criterion, professional partnership and field training, with a mean of 3.55. The third-ranked domain was program quality assurance, which obtained a mean score of 3.15. The program impact criterion ranked just above the penultimate position, with a mean of 3.22, while the student quality criterion was rated the lowest, with an average of 3.11.

These findings align with those of Al-Worathan and Al-Zaki (2013), who identified moderate obstacles impeding the implementation of academic accreditation standards. Similarly, the results corroborate the study by Gharib and Abdel-Moneim (2008), which also reported moderate challenges in this regard. The observed limitations may be attributed to the relatively small number of faculty members relative to the courses offered, or the insufficient availability of some specialized disciplines required for full implementation.

### 3.2. The answer to the second question: Are there statistically significant differences in faculty members' responses regarding the degree of application of CAEP standards based on their academic specialization and rank?

#### 3.2.1. Specialization

To answer this question, the researcher used the one-way analysis of variance, as shown in Table 4:

**Table 4**

*One-way ANOVA results on specialization*

N	The field	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	Value s (F)	Actual significance level	Statistics at (0.05) level
1	Educational content and Practice	3,40	0,50	3,55	0,81	2,50	0,50	2,87	0,84	51,57	0,00	Statistically significant
2	professional field training partnership	3,66	0,37	3,83	0,82	2,72	0,73	2,87	0,94	67,59	0,00	Statistically significant
3	Student quality	3,47	0,43	3,80	0,72	2,56	0,84	2,58	0,78	69,32	0,00	Statistically significant
4	The impact of the program	3,24	0,69	3,21	0,92	2,40	0,51	2,18	0,87	68,69	0,00	Statistically significant
5	Program quality assurance	4,48	0,47	3,70	0,85	2,40	0,65	2,48	0,77	88,91	0,00	Statistically significant

Table 4 presents the results of the One-Way ANOVA analysis examining differences among the research participants' responses concerning the evaluation of the degree of implementation of the American Educational Programs Accreditation Authority (CAEP) standards in the College of Education. As shown in Table 5, the F-value for the overall mean of the participants' responses reached 69.32, with a significance level below 0.001. This finding indicates statistically significant differences in faculty members' assessments of the extent to which CAEP standards are applied in the College of Education based on their area of specialization.

#### 3.2.2. Academic rank

To answer this question, the researcher used the one-way analysis of variance, as shown in Table 5:

**Table 5**

*Results of the single-domain analysis according to the academic rank variable*

Ranking	standard	The source of variance	DF	V(F)	level of significance
1	Educational content and knowledge	Between groups	3		0,00
		Within the group	65		
2	Practice professional partnership and field training	Between groups	3		0,00
		Within the group	65	16,10	
3	Student quality	Between groups	3		0,00
		Within the group	65	8,77	
4	The impact of the program	Between groups	3		0,00
		Within the group	65	11,31	
5	Program quality	Between groups	3	315,10	0,00
Total variation		Between groups		39,77	0,00
		Within the group	65		

Table 5 presents the results of the one-way analysis of variance examining differences in the mean opinions of the research sample regarding the assessment of the degree of application of CAEP standards in the College of Education based on academic rank (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor). The findings reveal statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level across all five domains. These outcomes are consistent with the studies conducted by Gharib and Abdel Moneim (2008) and Al-Worthan and Al-Zaki (2013).

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a moderate degree of application of the CAEP standards at the College of Education, Taibah University, as perceived by faculty members. This aligns closely with the results of Al-Worthan and Al-Zaki (2013) and Gharib and Abdel-Moneim (2008), who similarly identified moderate obstacles and challenges in implementing academic accreditation standards in Saudi universities. The consistency suggests that while progress has been made in adopting accreditation criteria, systemic barriers such as limited faculty numbers, insufficient specialized disciplines, and resource constraints continue to temper full implementation.

The ranking of CAEP domains in this study, with educational content and knowledge rated highest and student quality lowest, echoes findings from prior studies emphasizing curricular strength but signaling concerns about admissions, progression, and graduate support systems (Al-Mutawa, 2014; Al-Otaibi, 2015). This disparity reflects ongoing challenges in aligning student recruitment and quality assurance practices with international accreditation expectations, an issue also noted by Al-Ghamdi et al. (2024), who reported moderate challenges in teaching, research, and community engagement.

Significant differences in perceptions based on academic specialization and rank mirror patterns reported in the literature (Al-Ghamdi et al., 2024; Gharib & Abdel-Moneim, 2008), underscoring the influence of professional background and institutional experience on attitudes towards accreditation processes. These differences highlight the need for tailored capacity-building initiatives that address the specific concerns and knowledge gaps of diverse faculty groups.

Compared to international counterparts, Saudi universities, including Taibah University, are still navigating the complexities of establishing robust quality assurance frameworks (Al-Harbi, 2011; Al-Worthan & Al-Zaki, 2013). However, the Kingdom's establishment of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment and the strategic push for CAEP accreditation reflect a national commitment to elevate higher education quality and international competitiveness (Bougherira & Elasmara, 2023; Kharabsheh, 2012).

Overall, these findings reinforce the critical role of accreditation as both a driver and indicator of educational quality while revealing persistent institutional challenges that must be addressed to achieve full compliance with CAEP standards. Continuous improvement efforts, including enhanced faculty training, resource allocation, and integration of student quality measures, are essential to bridge the gap between current practice and accreditation expectations.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The study identified significant differences in the assessment of the degree of application of CAEP standards at the Faculty of Education at Taibah University based on the specialization variable, whereas no significant differences were found concerning the academic rank variable.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. It is advised that the university provide clear accreditation requirements aligned with CAEP standards and prioritize holding informative sessions and distributing brochures at the start of each academic year to raise awareness among new students about the importance of intellectual and physical alignment with their chosen specializations. Emphasis should be placed on the positive influence of this alignment on academic achievement and the fulfillment of future career goals.

Furthermore, the university should undertake exploratory and survey-based research to identify the actual and prospective societal needs related to the programs it offers. The research also recommends conducting in-depth studies for each CAEP criterion individually across the various academic specializations offered within the college to evaluate program quality comprehensively.

**Conflict of interest:** No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

**Ethical Approval:** The study adheres to the ethical guidelines for conducting research.

**Funding:** This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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