



Speech of Fr. Dr. Hady Mahfouz

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“The MUST of Accreditation: An Institutional Perspective”

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Greetings,

Is it a trend or a must?

I am honored to welcome you today at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik to address the challenges of programmatic accreditation of business schools. The title of the conference today prompts the question “Is accreditation a necessity or a trend?”. Today eminent personalities, college leaders, deans, faculty, and experts will definitely address the challenging issue of the accreditation of business schools, and I may suggest an answer from an institutional perspective that accreditation is a trend, is a necessity, and above all, is a MUST.

My belief stems from a long journey of institutional and programmatic accreditation here at USEK. In 2008 we started the Institutional Evaluation Program with the EUA that was completed later in 2012 when we were granted European Institutional Accreditation from the German National accrediting body evalag. In parallel, tremendous efforts have been invested for professional and program accreditations. At the institutional level, USEK was also awarded the UK Matrix standard for high-quality student services. At the program level, USEK received two site visits for 7 engineering and 2 computing programs, and is awaiting a decision from the ABET commission in July this year. NAAB accreditation for an architecture program, and accreditation of our Business Faculty are also ongoing projects.

I am mentioning our accreditation portfolio to share with you our belief that the accreditation journey is as important as its results. In fact, it is even more important. It's a journey that sets the tone for:

- A process of continuous improvement
- A culture of assessment and accountability
- A stronger relationship with the community
- An enhanced student learning experience
- An enhanced synergy with the institutional administrative framework

And above all, the journey of accreditation establishes the basis for a better future for students and graduates. According to a study made by International Data Corporation on tomorrow's best jobs, it is expected that 2 out of the 5 highest-growth and highest-wage positions in the United States by 2020 are going to be in Business areas¹. In our small

¹ https://news.microsoft.com/download/presskits/education/docs/IDC_101513.pdf

borderless world, employability can be addressed from qualitative and quantitative perspectives. Educational quality will increase the value of degrees and the chances for quality employability experiences and a brighter career.

In the same perspective, a recent paper published in the Journal of Science entitled: "How much is your Ph. D. Worth?" addresses the value of the Ph.D. degree. I would add the questions for our conference today: How much is your MBA worth? How much is your bachelor of business worth? The value of a degree depends on the perceived educational quality. You, as business professionals, know well that we are living in a world of information asymmetry where only the perceived and labeled value counts for the public. Therefore nowadays, universities and especially business schools aim for a multiple accreditation and quality labels to reward the quality educational effort and sustain a better employability.

Our gathering today from many continents is a tangible proof that accreditation is a trend and a must. Senior officers and scholars from USA, from Europe and from the MENA region and the Arab world are here to reflect upon such an important university issue. So welcome to all of you and thank you for being here. My thanks go also to the numerous university leaders, deans and scholars, coming from the Arab world and representing the Arab Society of Faculties of Business, Economics and Political sciences.

I would like to address my special thanks to H. E. Prof. Dr. Ahmad Jammal Director General of Higher Education in Lebanon, for representing H. E. minister Elias Bou Saab, for being part of this important event and for

being supportive and dedicated to the on-going development of the quality and the future of higher education in Lebanon.

Many thanks as well to the Faculty of Business at USEK, Dean Professor Nehmé Azoury and his team for successfully organizing this important event, and for attaining the Business School Impact System BSIS Label from EFMD, the European Foundation for Management Development recently this year.

While reiterating my best wishes for the success of this conference and its local and regional impact, I will end-up by saying again:

Yes, accreditation is a trend, but definitely it is also a MUST...