Title: Management Education in Public Administration: Lessons learned from experience in international accreditation.

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Introduction

During the past 8-10 years, the management education community has faced the proliferation of accreditation and quality systems, along with an increasing importance of media rankings. In many cases, particularly for accreditation, the quality criteria and standards which make up the model had been substantially conceived by the main constituencies of the community (namely representative bodies of the academic world and the corporate world) whilst for the rankings the leading actor is the single editor or newspaper.

Whether schools like it or not, it is a matter of fact that firms, students and the government themselves, though with different emphasis, rely on this wealth of information conveyed through different sources and having different meaning. In the meantime schools must afford the burden of collecting data and elaborating documents to give evidence to their quality.

What value can these systems add, and to whom? And under which conditions schools or programs can derive benefits while sustaining the costs of an accreditation process?

A few words about accreditation

It is common to use the word “accreditation” as a concise term implying overall quality properties for a school / university / programme that has been rewarded the qualification. I would therefore come back to the original meaning of “accreditation” as “the recognition that an institution complies with a set of pre-defined standards”. As such, an accredited school meets a set of standard and is a “quality school” if standards themselves depict a framework grounded and inspired by quality principles and concepts. This means that the linkage between accreditation and quality improvement is not so obvious. Based on this broad consideration, there are three main points of attention regarding accreditation I would like to underline before going through some accreditation examples.

The first very fundamental step is to verify if the accreditation model is truly focused on quality principles for quality in education. This is important not only for the individual institution/programme seeking accreditation, but also for the market (students, families, employers) that usually perceives “accreditation” as an omni comprehensive and univocal label.

The second point is that accreditation does not create quality learning experiences. High quality education programmes are created by effective interaction between a qualified faculty and a motivated student’s body along with a systematic educational process supported and organised by a well functioning institution. “Accreditation observes recognises, and sometimes motivates educational quality created within the institution” (AACSB International, 2004). In this sense it seems hard to separate the quality of the programme from the overall quality of the school delivering it.
The third point addresses on one hand the need for an accreditation system to summarise and describe the state of the art of management education in general or in a specific sector, but, on the other hand, also the difficulty to recognise the strongly innovative experiences that can be sometimes seen as non-conformities. On the same lines, also diversity is not always perceived as a pathway towards innovation or a potential source of innovative thinking. I would better say that diversity is mentioned in many declarations, but it is seldom recognised and appreciated in real situations and during the actual review.

The background
Starting from the AACSB accreditation system, the oldest one in business education which originated in the USA market, a number of others have been developed either with different scopes (an individual programme- MBA, MSc, BA- a set of programs forming the provision of a school or a business unit within the school, or the entire institution) or specific to different geo-political market ( Europe, the specific national education system, or the international market). All these systems share the ambition of truly mirroring the “quality dimensions” of a school’s activity and offering in advance a clear picture of the value-for-money of a program/ school to the prospective student / client/ financing body.

Due to the increasing international competition notably in the field of management education and for the European education systems following the Bologna declaration, schools and programs are looking for suitable modes of external recognition and reward, thus opening room for growing demand and offer of accreditation systems, quality labels and participation in media rankings.

Just to cast a glance to the possible structure of an accreditation model, the following table contains a comparison of the most widely diffused accreditation systems for management education worldwide.

Table 1- Comparison of accreditation models’ standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AACSB</th>
<th>EQUIS</th>
<th>AMBA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Precondition</td>
<td>1. Content and Mission</td>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mission and Objectives</td>
<td>2. Students and participants</td>
<td>2. The business school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Faculty composition and Development</td>
<td>3. Programme quality</td>
<td>3. Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Infrastructural Resources</td>
<td>5. Research and development</td>
<td>5. Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Intellectual Contributions</td>
<td>7. Faculty</td>
<td>7. Duration</td>
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<td>8. Phisical Resources</td>
<td>8. Delivery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Internal Issues</td>
<td>10. Outcomes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. Executive Education</td>
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It is easy to observe that the core common areas of analysis and assessment are:

- The school- even for a programme accreditation
- The student’s body
- The faculty
- The knowledge development
- The learning process

Each of these areas has to comply not only with specific quality criteria, but it influences the others, and all of them must therefore be consistent one to the other. Therefore the school/ institution offers the natural environment in which all the constituencies of an education activity can find place.
**Hans-on experience**

SDA Bocconi School of Management has experienced a number of different accreditation and quality systems, both national and international, focused on a single program or on the institution.

The author has been directly involved in a number of different accreditation systems: the EQUIS system (see [www.efmd.org/html/accreditations](http://www.efmd.org/html/accreditations)); the AMBA accreditation – [www.mbaworld.com](http://www.mbaworld.com) for MBAs provision; the ASFOR- [www.asfor.it](http://www.asfor.it) for some Masters taught in Italian and also the ISO 9000 certification and the EFQM excellence model with specific reference for education; the EAPAA for Masters in Public Management, and the AACSB, [www.aacsb.edu](http://www.aacsb.edu), for set of programmes in business education. This multifaceted experience offers the opportunity to compare and contrast different systems from both a methodological and practical standpoint.

In particular, it could be of interest pointing out a possible set of recommendations for an accreditation system willing to be really helpful both for the market and for the schools/programs.

**Some key points of attention**

For clarity purposes, we use to describe an accreditation system by means of the following scheme that we’ll adopt as a framework for our points of attention presentation.

Figure 1- Key components of an accreditation system

1) model (set of criteria)  
2) management process  
3) outcomes  
4) fine tuning process  
5) benchmarking  
6) network learning

1) Looking at the first box, the model is made up of the set of standards describing the key items which the model states as important for a high-quality school/program. Particular attention should be paid at:
How organic/well balanced/consistent the framework should be, notably the rationale for each standard

Usually each statement embedding a specific quality criterion is presented along with a rationale for its importance and a set of questions that can be used as helpful ways to explain how the school/programme is complying with the standard. Based on the comparison in Table 1 and on the direct application of the different models, it is possible to enlighten some key points.

The first comment refers to the structure of each standard and its related explanation, which is usually complete and agreeable. Considering, e.g., the EQUIS model, it has two different documents, one for the standards’ description, the other for the so called “Guidance Notes”, where you can find the key questions underpinning each standard and in the meantime a useful guide for the Self Assessment preparation. It is more common to find the rationale of each standard immediately after its presentation, in the same document (see, e.g., the AACSB and AMBA models). In our experience, this aspect has only a slight impact on the Self-Assessment development. The choice of having two different books allows a more articulated explanation of the standards, but is a bit more difficult to be handled during the Self-Assessment process.

A minor comment is related to the terminology adopted by the different models, which implies common concepts, but uses a sort of individual taxonomy. Take for example the concept of knowledge development, which is referred to as “Intellectual Contributions” by the AACSB, as “Research, Development and Innovation” by the EQUIS, and is embedded in the Faculty standards for the AMBA. Or the leading concept of the school’s Mission, which is the key element for the AACSB, in the sense that it drives the whole accreditation process, both from the self evaluation perspective and from the assessment perspective. The AACSB calls for a “mission statement useful for decision making” and it is the reference point for every further evaluation. The EQUIS wants to have a clear description of Mission and Strategy, but focuses more on the international orientation of the school and on the connections with the corporate world.

The relative importance of the various standards (core vs peripherals)

Each standard is of course important and meaningful, but not all of them have the same importance, especially in the eyes of each model. We can refer again to Table 1 and see the convergence around the strategic context offered by the school, the student’s body, the faculty, the knowledge development, the learning process. Each of these areas is articulated in specific though similar criteria according to the objectives, scope and stakeholders of the accreditation system, letting us infer that they are fundamental for the school/programme. This means that they have both to be pursued by the organisation seeking the accreditation as a way to reach higher quality, and to be accurately verified by the accreditation body, as key elements of assessment and evaluation.

Moreover, in a differential perspective, the non-core standard are both a specific characteristic of the accreditation system, and their presence can offer the school/programme the opportunity to better inform its target stakeholders, and therefore a better development tool.

The level of consensus they should aggregate

This point is related both to the initial definition of standards and to their continuous fine-tuning. The consensus should be built on the different stakeholders’ expectations and needs, but also on the evidence drawn from the site visit reports, which are the basis for the assessment of the accreditation model itself.

For example, looking at the EQUIS accreditation process, SDA Bocconi was in the first group of six European schools awarded the EQUIS label and contributed to its refinement, along with all the other schools. SDA Bocconi’s contribution, among others, helped for example:
1) Fostering the inclusion of executive education among the activities assessed by the system. The rationale for the inclusion of Executive education programmes was based both on the relevance of executive education for the development and diffusion of management education among companies of different sizes (especially SME) and on the mutual and beneficial links between post-graduate courses and executive education courses.

2) Reshaping the definition of “research” for management education institutions, including also commissioned research and innovation in teaching methodologies and tools.

3) Fostering the collection of a basis of data and figures in order to add a quantitative dimension to the evaluations and judgements of the reviewers, and build over time a quantitative picture of the accredited schools for benchmarking purposes.

Each of these issues originated a specific working group, which analysed the different evidences and findings emerged by the site-visits and led to an agreed adjustment of the standards.

The degree to which the standards truly mirror quality, diversity and encourage innovation

This issue is strictly related to the above point and to the methodology of assessment analysed in the following point. This would imply both a non-prescriptive approach of the standards and an adequate methodology of assessment that will be discussed furthermore. For example, a standard focusing on the curriculum content could prescribe a set of fundamental disciplines/topics, but also allow room for inclusion of innovative subjects or new pedagogic methodologies, such as e-learning or active learning. Or the concept of internationalisation that can be assessed not only through a benchmarking of traditional indicators, such as the rate of non-national students and faculty, but also considering the international exposure of the national faculty and the portion of teaching materials which could be used in international courses.

In order to encourage this flexible approach to the assessment, it seems important to move to the following point.

2) Looking at the second box of the framework, special attention should be paid at the need for an optimal balance between the degree of structured methodology for assessment and evaluation, the degree of adequate preparation for reviewers, be they peers or professionals, the mix of competencies in the review team, made up by deans, methodologist, clients, the degree of transparency in the decision making process and the degree of disclosure of the accreditation process’ result.

In this respect we suggest to have a look at the methodology developed by the EFQM Excellence Model.

The EFQM Excellence Model has been developed by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). Developed first of all as a model to underpin the European Quality Awards, the EFQM Excellence Model is now in wide scale use across Europe as both a tool for organisational self-assessment and as a tool for strategic integration. The evidence shows the methodology can be applied to any type of organisation, private sector and public sector, large and small. The Model is in use in most parts of the public sector, including Higher Education.

The EFQM Model is designed to be flexible enough to accommodate the requirements of organisations at various stages of implementation. The EFQM Model provides for controlled Self-Assessment, with organisations having to carry out their own detailed self-evaluation. Such Self-Assessment identifies strengths and areas for improvement and provides input to improvement plans. The EFQM Model is also complimentary to accreditation and certification processes.

The Model is a non-prescriptive framework that recognises there are many approaches to achieving sustainable organisational excellence.
The methodology embodies the principle of self-assessment. The institution would learn from feedback by reviewing impact of strategies and actions, trends in results, performance against target and by comparing with best-in-class through benchmarking.

The organisation looks at what it is doing against the framework of the Model to identify the things that it does well (or strengths) and the things it could improve (areas for improvement). The methodology for both self-assessment is based on RADAR (Registered Trademark) process, which is illustrated in Figure 2.

The RADAR scoring matrix in the Model guidelines invites the organisation/ the review team to consider under Results whether the following are favourable:

- Trends in results of 3 or more years
- Comparisons against target
- Comparisons with external organisations
- Evidence that results are caused by approach
- Whether the Results cover relevant areas

The Enablers are scored in terms of

- Soundness of approach
- Whether approach is well integrated
- Extent to which approach is deployed in a systematic way
- How effectiveness of approach and deployment is measured
- How learning takes place
- Whether evidence of improvement and learning exists

![Figure 2: RADAR Scoring Matrix](image)

The EFQM Excellence Model can be applied to any level in an organisation. So in a Higher Education institution it can be applied to the whole institution or to a Faculty, School or infrastructure
department such as human resources or facilities management. The outputs of a self-assessment process are typically:

- A definition of strengths and areas for improvement against each sub-criterion of the Model
- A set of prioritised actions that can be integrated into the business planning process
- An identification of gaps in terms of approaches or measures that can provide opportunities for benchmarking
- A score for each sub-criterion and criterion
- An overall score

A key feature is that scores can be used to track improvement over time and can be used to compare against a profile for the same sector or a different sector or against any type of organisation in Europe including those organisations that have won the European Quality Award or Prize.

From the above description it comes evident the degree of importance of a defined methodology of assessment across different review team and over time. This is particularly important when assessment is performed by a peer review team or by a multidisciplinary group of people, with a high level of professional expertise, but usually a low level of “assessment” methodological expertise.

The use of a peer review team creates commitment of the Deans of the business schools who are involved as team members and enthusiasm and sense of ownership among the participating institutions, but the risk is to become self-referenced, more focused on the institution rather than on the customer, and based on individual ideas and judgement rather than on hard unequivocal evidence. Equally frequent is the situation in which a reviewer is involved for the first time in a group, he/she has a different nationality, he/she is a client or a customer or a teacher. Having recognised the utmost importance of a plurality of different perspectives for the assessment, we would like to stress the unifying value of a well structured methodology and the transparency and helpfulness it can add to the whole process.

3) Looking at the third box, we would like to stress how important should be the type and level of the expected outcome for the school (and for the whole faculty that must be involved in the accreditation process), such as funding opportunities, visibility, comparability with others, improvement, belonging to a selected group, and others.

The effort of going through an accreditation process is relevant, both in terms of time devoted by people of the School/ programme and in terms of economic investment. The usual question which raises immediately when making a decision for accreditation is: Do we really need it? Which value can it add to us? Are we sure that our clients will perceive it?

We can focus on two different perspective: internal and external.

From an internal perspective, an accreditation process can offer the following benefits:

- alignment of leadership, policies and strategies with the results that are required, through:
  - development of a strategic tool that has the potential to deliver the corporate strategy and to enhance communication and understanding of overall direction
  - development of a methodology that is in alignment with the Modernising Government strategies in most European countries and the achievement of value-for-money services
  - dealing with leadership behaviours and instilling a climate of trust and co-operation across the institution
development of a rigorous and structured approach to organisation improvement using a self-assessment approach that is based on facts and evidence, measurement of actual performance against desired performance, through:

- development of an approach that could aid the School/ programme to achieve a consistency of direction by providing a means to integrate various quality related initiatives such as ISO 9000
- development of a methodology for application at all levels in an institution from faculty or department, to whole institution. In particular, it can stimulate multi-disciplined team working, good project management practice and innovation
- application of a methodology that is predicated on the value of customer focus and that will introduce the concept of process working as a means of enhancing cross-institution working

coordinating the efforts for common and shared improvement and competitiveness goals, through:

- Achieving consistency of standards and quality across all subject and programme areas, sharing good practice across faculties and departments,
- Integrating Quality Review with the Business Planning cycle to achieve a balance of stakeholder input from other sources such as key performance indicators and the student and staff experience survey results
- Improving the management of support processes eg facilities, estates, human resources

However, as previously said, the process of fostering an accreditation recognition is not an assurance of improvement by itself, but it strongly relies on the decision and will of the institution.

From an external perspective an accreditation process can offer the following benefits:

- to assure stakeholders (students, companies, government, community) that the school meets a clearly defined set of quality standards.

Working on accreditation process, it can be said that the impact of the information derived by accreditation is mainly related to the management education professional community, namely other schools/ programmes and professors. They all share the information and the content of the accreditation and interpret and use it in multiple ways, such as defining alliances, sharing and co-designing of programmes, offering visiting professorships or research scholarships. Less evident is the impact on the customers/ students community, both for the specificity they look for (e.g. the companies look for a specific key competence developed by schools they monitor over time, the students look for a set of key elements, including grants or scholarships, life experience, future employment possibilities). Therefore the accreditation label seems more a pre-conditions for inclusion in a short-list of selected schools/programmes rather than a synthetic criterion for the final choice.

- to build a benchmarking system to compare different schools so that the whole management education system in the world can continuously be improved.

The comparison issue is linked to the availability of validated and public data, information, figures. This is linked to the following point, where a specific experience on benchmarking will be presented.

4) The availability and rolling of some supporting process (fine tuning of the system, benchmarking programs, network learning) are key to maintain emphasis and focus on
quality efforts and goals. There is a strong opportunity for activating them by the accreditation institution, whilst considering their workload.

We consider useful to present a specific experience carried out by the EQUIS system for starting a benchmarking process across the EQUIS accredited Schools. Creating a set of benchmarking measures has been a recurrent idea of the “EQUIS project team” from the beginning. The “EQUIS Guide to Self-assessment” lists the following purposes:

“…..To provide an instrument for comparison and permanent benchmarking. Although the system will in no way attempt to impose uniform standards, it will allow schools to position themselves against international standards and will encourage convergence on best practice.
…..to promote quality improvement throughout Europe…the process and standard applied will be dynamic not fixed and rigid…the accreditation process sets standards and provides an on-going mechanism for constantly challenging the relevance of the standards…..”

In their background paper, “The European Quality Improvement System –EQUIS- A new pathway to Excellence for European Management Education”, 2000, Gordon Shenton and Bernadette Conraths underlined:

“…..EQUIS is a quality standard, not a ranking. Rankings presuppose a level of homogeneity between organisations that does not exist in the region. Rankings assume that there is one single best solution for everyone. EQUIS, by contrast, wants to turn diversity into strength. It enables individuals and organisations to seek out the institutions whose specific qualities are appropriate while assuring that it will deliver its services to high international standards of quality.

EQUIS…..enables institutions to benchmark themselves to international standards and make the necessary shift in their perspective and approach to position themselves in an international context….”

The working group had to explore the possibility to pursue four objectives:

1. To create a quantitative framework useful for the ELIGIBILITY phase;
2. To create a set of reference indicators helpful for the AUDIT TEAM;
3. To define a set of key indicators to allow schools to position themselves;
4. To assist in the re-accreditation process.

It is important to underline that the overall aim was to create a quantitative template. In other words the project was looking for description not for competition. More specifically, the idea was to find a way to make a comprehensive evaluation of EQUIS’ impact on and contribution to management education.

In order to achieve the stated objectives, we found that the following elements were needed:

- a continuously updated tableau de board
- a comprehensive eligibility picture
- a packet of information to send back to each participating school

Finally, it is important reconfirm what the EQUIS Benchmarking indicators project intended to represent and what not.

First, as stated above, it aimed to gain a description, not a prescription. There is always the danger of attributing too much power to data and figures and of shifting towards prescription.
However data can also allow us to focus on the similarities and differences, and to go back and observe the practice that has produced those figures. This can help to explain and value diversity.

Secondly, its objective was to have an overall picture of the statistic of indicators, not to focus on individual institutions’ indicators. The future intention is to publish only the aggregate values. It will be left to the individual schools to compare their indicators to the benchmark.

Third the purpose of the indicators is to have a comprehensive picture, not a ranking. Indicators are not a direct measure of quality. Because quality is multi-dimensional, it is difficult to come up with a single measure that encompasses it. Indicators or rates can quantify the occurrence of an event, but cannot qualify its appropriateness or desirability. Those using the information must determine what the indicator is telling them about the performance of the process over time, and whether there are opportunities for improvement. Each indicator must be examined within the context of the related environment.

The benchmarking exercise was performed on a group of 28 EQUIS accredited schools and led to learn the following elements, which can be useful to create a benchmarking programme that will help to continually refine the not only the EQUIS but also others accreditation systems.

The following are the recommended actions for the future derived by the experimental trial:

1. Decide which indicators are truly significant to the accreditation system’s process and goals;
2. Clearly define the significant terms in order to increase the homogeneity of the data gathered;
3. Explicitly state units of measure to be used for each indicator;
4. Request an update of all pertinent information from the participating institutions.

In order to accomplish the first three objectives, a bi-level process can be envisioned, that involves feedback from the participating schools, which will then be analysed and pulled together by the benchmarking group.

The proposal can be first asking the schools to comment on a draft glossary and on a possible list of indicators to be analysed. For consensus and improvement purposes, the list of indicators could be subject to two possible criteria of inclusion, from one hand the “level of interest in indicator” and on the other hand the “level of difficulty in collecting data”.

There are two additional recommendations a benchmarking project needs to make:

First, if schools are admitted to the benchmarking group, they must be willing to share their data and allow it to be disclosed. This will ensure open and honest exchange of information that will allow all involved to learn and improve.

Second, the re-accreditation process should explicitly ask for quantitative data already identified in the accreditation process, getting the schools used to the idea of disclosing and sharing data. It is also important that the benchmarking process support continued network learning.

A final comment needs to be dedicated to the issue of re-accreditation, as a way to maintain continuously involved the school and its people.

Three main issues can be envisaged, each of them linked to a point of attention.

The first is the kind and amount of information that has to be included and what has to be excluded from the new and upgraded set of documentation, be it a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) or some
other form of documentation. Its basis has necessarily to be the simultaneous aggregation of (i) the “old” SAR, (ii) the Peer Review Team report, containing comments and recommendations made after the site visit and (iii) the collection of documents and the brief summary of the key events occurred between the two accreditation site-visits, i.e. five years for EQUIS and AMBA. However a meaningful selection of the information has to be made, but we suggest not to underestimate the challenge of a new- and unknown- review team that can have the information available, but do not know directly the school/ programme.

Moreover many changes can occur in 5 years, not only internally, but also in the competitive arena, asking for a new strategic orientation.
In the end, as to our direct experience, we had to summarise the main action plans and changes occurred in the past 5 years, in order to clearly show our roadmap to improvement, the achievements and what is still underway, along with what does not make any sense anymore in the actual scenario.

We suggest that every accreditation system would perform a pragmatic and realistic evaluation of the trade-off between the burden of collecting information by each institution and its usefulness for both assessment and improvement. We strongly think that this analysis should be performed by every accreditation system to better balance documentation and comprehension of the organisational quality.

In many cases the focus on an excellent documentation becomes the main goal of an accreditation process, asking for people effort and time, whereas the actual improvement is not in the limelight. In other cases accreditation follows its own procedures, whereas improvements occur in separate occasions.

The second issue is to deal with the internal changes that can occur during the accreditation period, namely a new governance or a modernisation in the national education system.
This issue is a key aspect in every accreditation process, along with the direct involvement of the new top management that has to be gradually achieved. In many situations, e.g. in public institutions, sometimes happens that a new leading group uses strategic discontinuity as a signal of its “new deal”. This could imply that accreditation is no more on the top of the new management agenda. Or it could happen that a national quality assessment system can be introduced shifting the focus of institutions towards it.
Here is a tough challenge both for the individual institution and for the accreditation system: the system has to be as powerful towards improvement as to demonstrate its value and the cost-effectiveness of its adoption.

This is linked with the periodicity of the accreditation and the development of a true accreditation and self-assessment culture instilled in each participating school/ programme by the accreditation system itself, and sustainable over time.

The third issue is the availability of benchmarking data and information in an increasing competitive market. This is linked to a key role that an accreditation system should develop over time, that is enabling and encouraging “network learning” among the accredited schools through sharing of the information stored and made available by the accreditation system.
A particular caution however deserves the disclosure of confidential information about innovative solutions leading to the school’s competitive advantage, that have to be protected, especially when the assessment and site review is performed by a group of peers, that is necessarily limited in the field of high level management schools, and who know each other well after the first round of accreditation.
As a wrap-up comment regarding the re-accreditation, the time between two cycles should be determined after a balanced evaluation, not too long to let the school lose its commitment, not too short and pressing. However we would like to point out the need to for a greater continuity of reporting or contacts between the institution and the accrediting body, in order to periodically benchmark the progress of the accredited schools on one hand, on the other to monitor the changes in the environment, that could affect a possible adjustment in the standard definition or verification.

Some final considerations and open questions

We would therefore like to outline the following, as a basis for further discussion:

From a methodological standpoint most of the key characteristics of the accreditation systems for management education presented above apply to public management education programmes. It could be therefore useful to deepen the comparison between them with the aim to select the best practices they adopt and check if they could apply to public management programmes as well.

More specifically, we would suggest to start with some fundamental key points:

- Define the professional community the accreditation system aims to serve
- Define the distinctive value of the accreditation added to its stakeholders, compared to other management education accreditation systems
- Re-consider each step as defined in the scheme presented in Figure 1
- Verify the sustainability of the overall cycle, both from the accreditation body’s perspective and the schools’/institutions’ outcomes.

The role of the accreditation not always lays on a common cultural agreement. Is it a label for the market or a roadmap for quality improvement? Should it look at how things are done or at what has been done? Should the self-assessment phase be a way of preparing the accreditation documentation or a continuous monitoring tool, and should the site-visit perform a strategic audit and counselling, or be a judgment by peers, based on their own experience?

Finally, we feel the need to stress that the assessment methodology has to be very clear and rigorous, in order to avoid possible bias by different groups of different peers, allowing for better consistency across multiprofessional and multicultural groups.