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Abstract

Institutional accreditation in higher education holds universities accountable through external evaluation; at the same time, accreditation constitutes an opportunity for higher education leaders to demonstrate the quality of their institutions. In an increasingly global field of higher education, in which quality practices become diffused across national boundaries, U.S. institutional accreditation has been adopted in many countries as a form of external quality assurance. This study follows an ethnographic case study approach to explore in-depth how a Mexican institution of higher education, located only a few miles away from the U.S.-Mexico border, engaged in the process of institutional accreditation with a U.S. regional accrediting agency. Four themes constitute the finding of this study: (a) Reputational value is the central motivation to pursue U.S. accreditation given that, through accreditation, the institution in Mexico became connected to internationally recognized universities; (b) despite several benefits, the accreditation process established a complex division of labor in which

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members of the academic staff are necessary yet distanced from decision making; (c) compliance with highly challenging?yet construed as fair?standards legitimizes both the accreditation process and the U.S. accreditor; and (d) language and translation are valuable concepts to understand the accreditation process. Together, these findings suggest that U.S. accreditation may be approached as an exercise of global position taking.(HRK / Abstract übernommen) Blanco Ramirez, Gerardo, E-Mail: gerblanco@gmail.com