

A Comparative Study on Midwifery Education Accreditation Standards in Iran and Some Other Countries

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ABSTRACT

Quality midwifery education is critical to creating a decent workforce and improving mothers' and infants' health. Although international educational standards have been defined worldwide for the quality of midwifery education, there is a wide variety of types and natures of midwifery educational programs in different cultures. The purpose of this research is to compare the accreditation standards of midwifery education in Iran and other countries. This descriptive study was conducted using a comparative approach and the Beredy model, which was conducted in 2021. The inclusion criteria were program accreditation standards for midwifery undergraduate degrees and valid documents. Hospital accreditation standards, postgraduate accreditation standards, electronic and printed information that have not been approved by reputable publications, as well as reports, ideas, editorials, and views were among the exclusion criteria of this study. In this study, the standards used for midwifery accreditation in Iran and other countries and Organizations (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, the West African Health Organization, and ICM) were compared. According to the findings, the framework of midwifery accreditation standards, the mission and objectives, curriculum, students, faculty, resources and facilities, government financial management and administrative capacity, complaints and grievance, educational governance and quality, and environmental and participatory conditions. In line with the results of this study, it is suggested that due to the conditions and facilities of the community, the necessary changes be applied in the midwifery educational program accreditation in Iran.

KEYWORDS

Accreditation standards; program accreditation; midwifery education; comparative Study.

INTRODUCTION

The health of women and children is a prerequisite and the basis for sustainable human development (Moyer & Hedden, 2020). Midwives have a key role in ending avoidable maternal and infant deaths (Homer et al., 2014). Many complications of pregnancy and childbirth, as well as mothers' mortality and morbidity, can be prevented through the presence of a skilled midwife (Khan et al., 2006). The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that midwives have an important role in reducing Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) (World Health Organization, 2002). Improvement in mothers' and infants' health will be achieved when midwives receive higher and standard education (Carolan-Olah & Kruger, 2014).

Achieving high-quality education is very important because it increases the professional competence of midwives, and requires them to comply with standards in maternal and infant care (Renfrew et al., 2014; Leape et al., 2017). Although international educational standards have been defined worldwide for the quality of midwifery education, there is a wide variety in the type and nature of midwifery educational programs in different cultures (Luyben et al., 2017).

Improving the quality of midwifery education requires continuous evaluation of the current situation. Educational evaluation has a special place in educational activities (Nodehi et al., 2017). The evaluation of midwifery educational services has an important role in achieving the quality of educational activities and increasing the skills of learners in this field (Bazargan, 2001). Improving the quality of services has an important role in the health system, and the policy of all countries and governments is to improve the quality of health services (Mensah Abrampah et al., 2018).

Supervisory organizations must ensure maintaining the required competency for quality education. This includes the accreditation of educational programs, which is considered and implemented as an important strategy to improve the quality of midwifery care (Luyben et al., 2017; Homar et al., 2018). Accreditations are one of the models used in the evaluation. Standards form the basis of accreditation. In the field of educational accreditation, standards are statements that show the level of expectations of educational experts from the requirements of educational programs and the conditions of these programs, and quality is measured based on them. Accreditation is a common strategy to improve healthcare standards (Greenfield & Pawsey, 2018) and is one of the most important methods of quality assurance and promotion in medical education in the country (Mirzadeh et al., 2001). The purpose of midwifery education accreditation was to improve the quality of midwifery education and midwifery care (Nove et al., 2018). In the study of Bogren (2020) from the perspective of the participants, who were midwifery group professors, the existence of accreditation increased authority in midwifery education, and strengthened inter-department and intra-department connection and participation.

Zhou in China reviews and compares the present situation of midwifery management and education in five representative countries located in North America, Europe, and Oceania. Based on the experience of these countries, Midwifery development in China should continue

to explore and develop midwifery university education, form a midwife professional title system, and standardize midwife certification and management. A quality midwifery environment should be created to enhance career attractiveness (Zhou & LU, 2018). A study was conducted in Afghanistan to establish a mechanism for ensuring and regulating the quality of pre-service midwifery education in Afghanistan during a period of intense expansion. Finally, it was concluded establishment of a national mechanism to accredit midwifery schools and ensure quality education can be achieved during a period of rapid expansion. (Smith et al., 2008)

In Iran, undergraduate studies in midwifery are for 4 years and students must pass 130 units (theoretical and clinical). There are conditions for studying midwifery up to the doctoral level in Iran, and the evaluation of educational quality for universities is managed by the government (Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran, 2013).

Given the importance of accreditation programs in improving the quality of higher education, including midwifery education, this study aimed to compare the accreditation standards of the undergraduate midwifery educational program using the comparative research method and benefiting from the experiences of other countries. So far, no independent and specialty accreditation program for midwifery has been announced in Iran. For the accreditation of the midwifery education program in Iran, general accreditation standards are used.

After comparing the similarities and differences, the final standards were extracted and some suggestions were made for their application in Iran. Finally, a step was taken to align the national standards with the international ones.

Objectives

This study aimed to compare the accreditation standards of the programs of Iran's Ministry of health with several selected countries and to extract the accreditation standards of the program to benefit from the experiences of other countries.

METHODS

The present study is a descriptive-analytical study with a comparative approach, which was conducted in 2021. This study used the descriptive method based on comparative analysis, based on Beredy's model, to analyze the data. One of the research methods for reviewing and reforming educational programs is conducting comparative studies. A comparative study is a logical strategy for drawing on the experiences of others. In definition, a comparative study is a method that tries to determine the differences and similarities of two or more phenomena through comparison. Comparative study leads the educational program toward creating the ability to solve educational problems and difficulties and shows a set of factors and contexts effective in the success or the failure of educational systems (Babones, 2013).

Beredy model (1969), one of the comparative education models, was used in this study. This model is an absolute and abstract method among the methods of comparative study which defines four stages in comparative studies: description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison (Adick, 2018).

In the description stage, research phenomena are prepared based on evidence and information, note-taking, and sufficient findings for reviewing and criticizing in the next stage. The information is evaluated and analyzed in the next stage, i.e. the stage of interpretation. In the juxtaposition stage, the information prepared in the previous stage is categorized and put together to create a framework for comparing similarities and differences. In the comparison stage, the research question is reviewed and compared according to the similarities and differences and the answers to the research questions (Babones, 2013).

Based on this model, first, the required information about the latest standards of accreditation of midwifery education was examined in Persian texts through access to the articles and the documents obtained from the published reports of the World Health Organization, and in the databases of Embase, Scopus, PubMed, Science Direct, and Google Scholar search engine, the English texts on ICM website. Moreover, the following keywords were examined on IRANDOC, Sid, and the website of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran:

Accreditation standards, accreditation program, midwifery education, quality improvement, patient safety

The inclusion criteria consisted of program accreditation standards for undergraduate midwifery, articles, and valid documents in English and Persian. Hospital accreditation standards, postgraduate accreditation standards, electronic and printed information that has not been approved by reputable publications, as well as reports, ideas, editorials, and views were among the exclusion criteria in this study.

In this study, the standards used for midwifery accreditation in Iran and other countries (all 5 continents) were compared. The accreditation standards of the United States(USA), the United Kingdom(UK), Australia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the accreditation standards developed by the West African Health Organization (WAHO), and ICM accreditation standards were also used, for it is the highest union and international organization of midwifery. The criteria for selecting the countries and the organizations included having effective experiences regarding accreditation, being active in the field of the accreditation of midwifery faculties, and accessing their information in Internet search databases.

For data analysis, in the first stage, each case study, i.e. the selected countries and organizations, was discussed. In the interpretation stage, the information and the data obtained from the previous stage were reviewed, and at the same time, the accreditation criteria and standards of each of the selected countries and organizations were analyzed and extracted. In the juxtaposition, stage, the obtained information and data were classified. Thus, the necessary framework for the next step, i.e. the possibility of comparing similarities and differences, was provided. In the comparison stage, using the results of the juxtaposition stage, the criteria and the standards were examined and compared accurately and according to the details. In the end, the similarities and the differences were identified, and practical and specific suggestions and solutions were presented.

In all stages of the research, the members of the research team exchanged opinions by holding joint meetings. By trying to avoid distortion in data management, and respecting confidentiality about data and information obtained from the sources of midwifery training accreditation programs of selected countries, the researchers took into account the basic ethical considerations necessary to conduct the study.

The study was approved by the research ethics committee of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, southwest of Iran (Ref. ID: IR.AJUMS.REC.1400.126).

RESULTS

In Iran, there are no specific midwifery education accreditation standards. For the accreditation of the midwifery education program in Iran, general accreditation standards have been developed in 5 domains. These general accreditation standards have been developed generally and include a set of educational programs in medical universities (Joolaei et al., 2016). Therefore, what is mentioned in these results as the accreditation standards of midwifery education in Iran are the same general standards that have been developed for all medical sciences programs. Moreover, ICM standards were used as a valid and international reference which is used in all the countries around the world to improve the quality and develop the standards of midwifery education accreditation.

To compare the domains, the accreditation standards in the selected countries/organizations have been presented in Table 1. The results of the study on each of the accreditation domains of the midwifery education program have been presented separately in Tables 2 to 7. It is noteworthy that some of the countries under study did not have any information in some areas, so their names have not been mentioned in some of the tables.

Table 1. (see appendix).

Mission and Objectives

According to Table 2, Iran, the United States, the WAHO, and ICM had the domain of *mission and objectives*. Of course, there were some differences between the countries/organizations under study regarding the domain titles and the number of criteria.

Table 2. (see appendix).

Curricula

Table 3 shows a comparison of the domain *curricula* in the accreditation program of the selected countries/organizations.

Table 3. (see appendix)

Students

The domain *students* were included in the accreditation standards of Iran, the USA, Australia, UAE, and ICM, the information regarding which has been given in Table 4 (see appendix).

Faculty

Australia did not include faculty members in its accreditation program; therefore, it has not been included in Table 5 which illustrates accreditation standards in the domain of *faculty* it has not been mentioned.

The domain of *faculty* in ICM is one of the sub-criteria of the domain of *midwifery faculty* and examines the status and the conditions of faculty members' presence in midwifery education.

Table 5 (see appendix).

Resources and Facilities

Table 6 examines the domain of *Resources and Facilities* in the midwifery education accreditation program in the selected countries/organizations.

Table 6 (see appendix).

Other Domains

According to Table 7:

-In the United States, there were three domains: *Government, Financial Management and Administrative Capacity, and Complaints and Grievance* which differed from other countries' accreditation domains.

-The Domain of *Educational Governance and Quality Standards* was related to the accreditation of the United Kingdom.

-In Australia, there is a *Governance* domain.

-The domain *Program organizing* was related to the accreditation of UAE.

-WAHO has a domain called *Environmental and Participatory Conditions* that do not exist in the accreditation of other countries.

Table 7 (see appendix).

Proposed accreditation Domains/Standards for Iran

The standards, criteria, and sub-criteria of the selected countries were reviewed by the research team several times. Finally, by making the necessary corrections and modifying the classes, according to the midwifery curriculum and the job description of midwives in Iran, the main classes (domains) and sub-classes (standards) were formed (Table 8). This table shows the main domains obtained from this comparative study. The table formed from the comparative study includes 5 domains and 18 standards.

Table 8 (see appendix).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to develop a specific framework of accreditation standards for midwifery education in Iran through the comparative study of accreditation standards of midwifery education in some countries.

The present study showed the accreditation standards of midwifery education in the selected countries have been classified into the domains including *the Mission and Objectives, Curricula,*

Students, Faculty, Resources and Facilities, Government financial management and administrative capacity, Complaints and grievance, Educational governance and quality, and Environmental and participatory conditions.

As mentioned, the first five domains are the standards used in most accreditation programs. Therefore, these standards are among the main domains of accreditation.

In a study conducted by Nove et al, (2018) which developed a global midwifery education accreditation program, the midwifery education accreditation program was classified into seven domains: National requirements - Evaluation strategy - Resources, facilities, and services - Organization and management –Students’ performance – The faculty of midwifery - Presenting relevant and competency-based curricula. The results of the present study are in line with this study.

Bogren et al. (2018) conducted a study in Bangladesh to discover and describe the important and necessary factors for midwifery education accreditation using ICM standards. They developed a tool with 6 domains: Organization and Management, The Faculty of midwifery, Students’ performance, Curriculum content, Resources, Facilities and Services, and Evaluation strategies. So, the results of the present study are consistent with the study of Bogren et al. (2018). In Bogren's study, only ICM accreditation standards were used, but in this study, in addition to ICM, accreditation standards for midwifery education in other countries were also used.

By comparing the similarities and differences of domains, it was found that the accreditation standards of the programs used in Iran and ICM are very similar in five domains. There were slight differences in the titles of the domains and the number of criteria. These 5 domains include Mission and Objectives, Curricula, Students, The Faculty Board, and Resources and Facilities. A study that compared the Iran midwifery curriculum with ICM international standards for midwifery education, concluded that except for the two items of female circumcision and natural limitations of the results of routine pregnancy tests in the community, the Iranian midwifery curriculum includes all the items proposed by ICM regarding midwifery education standards (Bahri et al., 2018).

The Mission and Objectives are the basis of midwifery education accreditation standards. The mission of an organization defines the framework of its activities. If the mission of an organization is designed correctly, it will lead to success, and if it is set incorrectly, it will lead to its failure. Learning objectives determine the final destination or the results that are expected to be observed in learners' behavior after the implementation of an educational program. Given the importance of this domain, it is expected that all countries use the domain of *mission and objectives* for midwifery education accreditation. In the present study, all the countries under study included this domain in their accreditation programs and thus acknowledged its importance.

As expected, the domain of *Curricula* was included in all the accreditation programs, as the main domain. A curriculum is defined as an activity or activities that involve the acquisition

of productivity, skills, and knowledge. In all the countries under study, the specificity of the curriculum, the appropriate teaching method, and the evaluation of students' performance have been emphasized to train a professional midwife. In some of the countries under study, in addition to the minimums mentioned in the domain of *curriculum*, more items have been mentioned. ICM organization refers to "multidisciplinary participation in the midwifery program" in the domain of *curriculum*, the importance of which in improving work results is undeniable. Zorek et al. (2013) concluded in their research that interdisciplinary and group education will play a prominent role in the professional future of individuals at both national and international levels.

Surprisingly, only the United States referred to "Virtual classes and Distance learning" in the domains of curriculum, *Resources, and Facilities*. E-learning seems to be very important in the current situation governing societies. The importance of this educational method lies in saving time, reducing costs, turning traditional training into modern learning, and increasing efficiency. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, e-learning had a major impact on improving the quality of the teaching-learning process. Therefore, it is recommended to include it in accreditation programs.

Interestingly, in the midwifery education accreditation in the United Kingdom, the criterion "Turning students into lifelong learners" has been mentioned in the field of curriculum. Considering the rapid changes in science and knowledge, and the urgent need for health personnel for up-to-date knowledge, it is necessary to use educational methods and techniques that make students self-directed learners and give them the power of reasoning and judgment (Benade & Jackson, 2018). Therefore, empowering students to acquire the skills necessary to turn them into lifelong learners should be one of the ultimate objectives of educational curricula. The university environment and the educational program should be able to turn students into lifelong learners, increase their skills for creative, and constructive thinking, and strengthen their individual, participatory, and communication skills (Nasir, 2020)

Midwifery education accreditation in Australia has included the criterion "*Considering the existing and the emerging national, regional, and international health priorities*" in the domain of *curriculum*. It is very important to consider health priorities to guide the student training procedure. Health prioritization, at both national and international levels, plays a very important role in promoting the design of educational programs. Therefore, this criterion is also suggested for midwifery education accreditation in Iran.

The domain of *Students* was among the domains agreed upon by most countries in the midwifery education accreditation program. The most important part of accreditation is related to the learning outcomes (Kafaji, 2020); giving direct support to these students plays an important role in achieving accreditation objectives (Ulker & Bakioglu, 2019). Among the countries under study, the United Kingdom and WAHO did not include this domain in their accreditation programs, but ICM has examined this domain very thoroughly and comprehensively. One of ICM's criteria for the accreditation of the domain of *students* was

"specified entry requirements and evaluating students' previous learning, student admissions following the national policies, examining students' expectations, and active participation of students in midwifery programs and committees."

The domain of *Faculty* existed as a separate domain in most of the accreditation programs under study (except for Australia). The professors' proficiency and competence were among the minimum requirements of this domain for their continuous professional education and development. In training students in health-related disciplines, considering the sensitivity of community health, having qualified professors is of great importance. Teacher training has an important role in increasing students' learning levels (Akiba et al., 2010). Professors are expected to become familiar with the latest teaching strategies and technologies and help to promote students (Singh & Haynes, 2020). Bogren et al. (2018) concluded that professors' preparation and being up-to-date, as well as a standard curriculum, lead to the presence of professional midwives in the treatment system.

The domain of *Resources and Facilities* is also among the most important fields in midwifery education accreditation, which was included in the accreditation programs of Iran, ICM, the USA, Australia, and WAHO. Effective training requires providing adequate resources and facilities. Also, in an article, the conditions of clinical learning environments were related to the burnout of students (Maghbouli et al., 2021). The minimum criterion of "sufficient resources and facilities to hold theoretical and practical classes" had been mentioned by the aforementioned countries for the domain of *resources and facilities*.

The results show that the domain of the implementation of standards is different in different countries. Moreover, midwifery accreditation standards in selected countries have been developed exclusively for midwifery faculties. However, the accreditation standards of Iran are currently developed in a general manner and through the standards of medical universities. For this purpose, the authors of this article have presented Table 8 as the proposed standards of midwifery education in Iran, which includes the most important domains in midwifery education accreditation in the countries under study. These domains include "Mission and Objectives, Educational program, Student Services, The Faculty board, and Resources, Facilities, and Services", which were among the most important domains of accreditation in the selected countries.

It is inferred that the accreditation standards of each of the selected countries follow the national, regional, and organizational objectives for midwifery education. Despite the differences in the domains, the standards' being dynamic is the strength point of accreditation.

Although the credit system in low-middle income is associated with many challenges. The standard level of standards, costs, problems related to competent evaluators and their training, the weakness of information management systems, and problems of use are important challenges in this country. However, it is recommended to use credit for low-middle income as a tool to improve the quality of health services. (Bukonda et al., 2003; Cleveland et al., 2011; Smits et al., 2014)

The results of the present study can be provided to the policymakers and educational managers in the field of midwifery and accreditation in Iran to combine the accreditation standards of the midwifery undergraduate program. More research should be done on the localization of these standards and the development of national accreditation standards for midwifery that are compatible with the social, cultural, and economic conditions and the facilities of Iran.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of this study is the use of midwifery education accreditation standards of countries that each represented one of the world's continents, leading to a global comparison. The limitation of this study was the use of midwifery education accreditation standards by only one representative from each continent. It is suggested that in future research, accreditation standards of more countries and organizations be used for comparison.

CONCLUSION

In line with the results of this study, it is suggested that due to the conditions and facilities of the community, the necessary changes be applied in the midwifery educational program accreditation in Iran.

Due to the ever-increasing development of knowledge, it is necessary for governments, especially in less developed countries, to support the creation and implementation of accreditation structures for midwifery education by WHO policies, to facilitate the training of graduates with the ability to provide safe care and fit the needs of society. Considering that this study is in line with the priority research in health research, it is hoped that with its development and operational application, the field of improving the education and training of health care providers will be provided.

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APPENDICES

Table 1.

The comparison of the domain titles /the accreditation standards in the selected countries/organizations

countries/organizations	domain titles								
Iran (2016)	Mission and objectives	Student education	Student Services	Faculty	Resources and facilities				
USA (2020)	Mission, program assessment, and student achievement	Curricula	Faculty	Facilities, equipment, and other resources	Governance, financial management, and administrative capacity	Student Services	Student Affairs	Measures of program length	Complaints and grievance
Australia (2014)	Governance	Curriculum conceptual framework	Program development and structure	program content	Student assessment	Students	Resources	Management of midwifery practice experience	Quality improvement and risk management
UK (2018)	Learning culture	Education governance and quality	Student empowerment	Educators and assessors	Curricula and assessment				
UAE (2020)	Graduates	Program organization	Curriculum	Faculty	Admissions	Program retention			
WHO (2015)	Curriculum	Faculty	Facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources	Governance, financial, and administrative capacity	Environmental and participatory conditions				
ICM (2013)	Organization and administration	Midwifery Faculty	Student body	Curriculum	Resources, facilities, and services	Assessment strategies			

Table 2

The comparison of accreditation standards in the domain of mission and objectives in the countries/organizations under study

country	Domain title	Standards
Iran	Mission and objectives	1- Defining the mission and the objectives of the faculty. 2- The comprehensiveness and clarity of the mission and the developed objectives. 3- The existence of a specific mechanism to evaluate the level of achieving the objectives of the faculty and the covered units. 4- The participation of the faculty authorities in developing the mission and objectives statement.
ICM	Organization and Administration	1- Government support for the philosophy and the objectives of the midwifery education program. 2- The midwifery education program has the financial and public support of the policies to prepare qualified midwives. 3- Specific budget and budget control of the Faculty of Midwifery to meet the needs of the program. 4- Developing and guiding the policies and the curricula of the midwifery education program. 5- The existence of a qualified midwifery group manager experienced in management. 6- Considering the national and international policies and standards to meet the needs of the labor force.
USA	Mission, program assessment, and student achievement	1- Mission. 2- Program goals and assessment. 3- Measures of student achievement to determine program success. 4- Continuous quality improvement.
WAHO	Governance, financial, and administrative capacity	1- Approving the legal documents for establishing the institution. 2- Approving the programs by a professional supervisory institution. 3- The existence of a strategic plan and an organizational chart. 4- The records of the staff/students, the class schedule, and the budget. 5- The existence of policies and procedures.

Table 3

The comparison of accreditation standards in the domain of curricula in the countries/organizations under study

country	Domain title	Standards
Iran	curriculum	1- specific curricula. 2- Supporting active and appropriate teaching methods. 3- Regular evaluation of the curricula. 4- The existence of an efficient and responsive system to evaluate students' academic progress. 5- The existence of an efficient and responsive system to evaluate students' academic progress in practical and clinical subjects. 6- Providing academic counseling and guidance services for students. 7- Paying special attention to solving the educational problems of the faculty through research. 8- The appropriateness of providing educational services. 9- Planned attention to the top and talented students.
ICM	curriculum	1- The compatibility of the philosophy of the midwifery education program with ICM's philosophy and the care model. 2- Training a qualified midwife based on the midwifery education program. 3- Acquiring basic competencies for midwives' performance according to the main ICM documents. 4- Including both theoretical and practical elements in the midwifery curriculum. 5- Using evidence-based approaches for teaching and learning in midwifery programs. 6- Multidisciplinary participation in midwifery programs.
	Assessment Strategies	1- Assessing students' performance and progress regarding learning. 2- Identifying students' learning problems. 3- Regular review of the curriculum as part of the quality improvement process. 4- Continuous examination of practical learning locations. 5- Examining the external effectiveness of the program.

USA	curricula	1- Curriculum mapping. 2- learning activities. 3- Assessment of learning. 4- Ongoing curriculum improvement. 5- Additional curriculum requirements for degree-granting institutions. 6-Additional curriculum requirements for distance education programs.
	Measures program length	1- Time spent in didactic and clinical learning. 2- Awarding academic credits. 3- Additional credit requirements for degree-granting institutions.
UK	curricula and assessment	Designing, developing, and presenting curricula and evaluations for the students to achieve the program’s skills and outcomes.
	Students Empowerment	1- Providing different learning opportunities to achieve the program's skills and outcomes. 2- Turning students into lifelong learners through empowering and supporting them.
	Learning culture	1. Prioritizing the learning culture and preserving the existing values. 2- Preserve educational values in all learning environments.
Australia	Curriculum conceptual framework	1- Designing the foundation of the philosophy of education. 2- Philosophical approach to midwifery activities.
	program development and structure	1- Studying the program in collaboration with the key stakeholders to reflect the contemporary trends in midwifery practice and training. 2- Compliance in length and structure with the framework of the competencies offered in Australia. 3- Developing national competence standards for midwives. 4- Sufficient experience in practical midwifery practice.
	Program content	1- Covering national competency standards for midwives through program content. 2- Considering the existing and emerging regional, national, and international health priorities.
	Student assessment	1- Using different evaluation methods to achieve the required learning outcomes. 2- A brief evaluation of students’ performance regarding the national standard of midwifery competence.
	Management of midwifery practical experience	The program provider ensures to provide each student with a variety of supervised midwifery experiences in inappropriate environments and conditions to achieve the standards of national midwifery competence.
quality improving the and risk management	The program provider can assess and address the risks in the program and its outcomes, and the main focus is on the continuous improvement of the quality of teaching, students’ learning, and the graduates’ competence.	

UAE	Curriculum	1- Curriculum design. 2- Core curricula. 3- learning environment. 4- Student assessment. 5- Program evaluation. 6- Curriculum partnership.
	Graduates	1- Outcomes. 2- Program graduate attributes and competencies.
WAHO	curriculum	1- The clarity of the course content and curriculum. 2- The clarity of the teaching methods and the evaluation methods. 3- Develop internship agreements between midwifery faculties and health centers to make practical learning possible.

Table 4

The comparison of accreditation standards in the domain of *students* in the countries/organizations under study

Country	Domain Title	Standards
Iran	Students	1- Providing essential services for students. 2- Providing appropriate extracurricular services. 3- Students' participation in student affairs. 4- Addressing students' disciplinary affairs.
ICM	Student body	1- Writing student admission policies clearly, such as entrance requirements and previous learning evaluation strategies. 2- Admitting qualified midwifery volunteers without any discrimination (e.g. gender, age, origin, nationality, religion). 3- Admitting qualified midwifery volunteers following national health care policies and labor force programs. 4- Writing student policies clearly, such as students' expectations, responsibilities, requests, or complaints; continuous evaluation of the curriculum, the faculty, and feedback. 5- The existence of mechanisms for active student participation in the governance of the midwifery program and committees. 6- Students providing midwifery care under the supervision of a midwifery professor or a clinical professor.
USA	Student Services	1-Student support services. 2- Technical support for distance and correspondence education students.
	Student Affairs	1- Student admission and enrollment. 2- Disclosure to the public, including prospective students. 3- Satisfactory academic progress 4- Student rights, transcripts, and refund.
Australia	Students	1- The approach of presenting a program for attracting, enrolling, supporting, and evaluating students with the values of

transparency, originality, equal opportunity, and the appreciation of social and cultural diversity.

UAE	Admissions	1-Admission and selection policies 2. Student admission requirements.
	Retention	Student retention policies and systems

Table 5

The comparison of accreditation standards in the domain of *faculty* based on the countries/organizations under study

Country	Domain Title	Standards
Iran	Faculty	1- The existence of an appropriate policy for hiring faculty members. 2- Appropriate composition, distribution, and the number of faculty members in the faculty. 3- The existence of a suitable system for the evaluation and promotion of faculty members. 4- The existence of an appropriate information system regarding faculty members. 5- The existence of a specific mechanism for the continuous education of faculty members. 6- the clarity of faculty members’ activity program.
ICM	Midwifery faculty	1- The faculty of midwifery mainly includes midwifery professors and, if necessary, specialists in other fields. 2- The existence of qualified midwifery professors. 3- The experience of a minimum of 2 years of practical work as a clinical professor in the same department. 4- The education, support, and supervision of clinical professors. 5- The cooperation of theoretical and clinical professors to evaluate students' practical learning. 6- Determining and monitoring the ratio of students to theoretical professors and clinical professors. 7- Regular evaluation of the effectiveness of midwifery faculty members.
USA	Faculty	1- Faculty qualifications, hiring, and promotion. 2- Faculty orientation and professional development. 3- Evaluation and

		supervision. 4- Faculty rights and responsibilities. 5- Additional faculty requirements for degree-granting institutions.
UK	Educators and assessors	Theoretical and practical learning and evaluation are facilitated effectively and objectively by qualified and experienced specialists with the necessary expertise for educational and evaluation roles.
UAE	Faculty	1- Academic and Clinical Faculty. 2- Professional development of faculty.
WAHO	Faculty	1- The number, composition, and qualifications of the professors and the staff. 2- The existence of continuous educational programs and professional development.

Table 6

The comparison of accreditation standards in the domain of *resources and facilities* based on the countries/organizations under study.

Country	Domain Title	Standards
Iran	Resources and facilities	1- The appropriateness of the physical space for faculty affairs. 2- Proper spaces and facilities for the use of the staff and clients. 3- The observance of safety standards in faculties. 4- The appropriateness of the space allocated to students for individual, group, and extracurricular activities. 5- The existence of suitable facilities for teaching practical skills to students (skill Lab). 6- The existence of appropriate laboratory facilities and equipment. 7- The appropriateness of the facilities and the services of faculty libraries and the affiliated educational hospitals. 8- The appropriateness of the facilities and the services of the information system.
ICM	Resources, Facilities, and Services	1- Ensuring the safety and well-being of students and professors in teaching and learning environments. 2- The existence of sufficient education and learning resources to meet the needs of the program. 3- Having sufficient human resources to support theoretical and practical learning. 4- Access to adequate practical midwifery experiences in different departments to meet the learning needs of each student. 5- Determining selection criteria for practical midwifery learning locations.

The United States	Facilities, equipment, and other resources	1- Physical or virtual classroom facilities. 2- Library and learning resources. 3- Clinical sites. 4-Administrative office facilities, digital technology, and resources.
Australia	Resources	1- Having adequate facilities, equipment, and educational resources. 2- Having qualified, capable, and sufficient staff.
WAHO	Facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources	1- The existence of minimum equipment and supplies required for the effective performance of faculties, hospitals, classrooms, and clinical skill centers.

Table 7

The comparison of accreditation standards in other domains based on the countries/organizations under study

Country	Domain Title	Standards
USA	Government, Financial Management, and administrative Capacity	1- Governance. 2- Financial management. 3- Administrative staff. 4- External regulations.
	Complaints and grievance	1- Institutional grievance policy. 2- Retention of grievance records. 3- External grievance mechanism.
UK	Educational governance and quality	1- Ensuring the compliance of governance systems with all legal, supervisory, specialty, and educational requirements. 2- Ensuring safety and optimal quality in learning environments.
Australia	Governance	1- Using governance laws to develop the midwifery program and enhance the quality of the educational experience.
UAE	Program organizing	1-Governance. 2- Program accreditation. 3- Infrastructures. 4- Partnership.

WAHO	Environmental and participatory conditions	1- Participation in associations and unions is done according to the plans for the welfare of students, as well as recreational and sports facilities, health, and the safety of the environment. 2- The existence of complete data analysis tools to reveal the barriers to women's participation in education and employment after graduation. 3- Support for addressing gender discrimination issues in health workforce development.
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Table 8

The new framework of midwifery education accreditation standards in Iran

No.	Domain	Standard
1)	The mission and objectives	Specifying the goals of the program Program accreditation Training students according to the needs of the society
2)	Curricula	Curriculum Teaching and learning methods Distance Learning
3)	Student Services	Clarifying the clinical conditions before student registration The requirements for student entry to clinical departments Student empowerment Handling student requests and complaints Regular evaluation of students
4)	Faculty	The number, composition, and qualifications of the professors The existence of professional education and development programs Evaluating the professors
5)	Resources, facilities, and services	The facilities of classes and skill lab Library facilities and services Clinical locations The security and welfare of students and professors