

ABET Accreditation in Africa: A Comparative Analysis

Mohammed Mujahid Ulla Faiz (Corresponding author)

Lincoln University College

Petaling Jaya, 47301, Selangor, Malaysia

E-mail: pdf.mujahidullafaiz@lincoln.edu.my

Sai Kiran Oruganti

Lincoln University College

Petaling Jaya, 47301, Selangor, Malaysia

E-mail: saisharma@lincoln.edu.my

Ganesh Khekare

Vellore Institute of Technology

Vellore, 632014, Tamil Nadu, India

E-mail: khekare.123@gmail.com

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Abstract

Universities are increasingly prioritizing program accreditation due to the significant benefits it offers students, faculty, and employers. Graduates from accredited programs enjoy clear advantages over those from unaccredited ones. Yet, there has been little research comparing ABET-accredited programs across African nations. This study addresses that gap by presenting the first quantitative analysis of all active ABET-accredited programs in six African countries where such programs currently or previously existed. Additionally, sustaining accreditation is challenging, leading some programs to lose their accredited status over time. Therefore, this research also examines historical trends and the current status of formerly accredited programs in Africa. The findings aim to support universities, accrediting bodies, and policymakers—particularly in these regions—in enhancing program quality and adherence to ABET standards.

Keywords: ABET, Accreditation, Engineering, Technology, Africa

1. Introduction

Quality education is a central objective of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Program accreditation serves as a recognized measure of educational excellence through rigorous peer evaluation against global standards. However, accreditation is not permanent, institutions must consistently uphold quality through periodic reassessments to maintain their accredited status. The Information Systems undergraduate program at the University of Pretoria, for instance, earned ABET accreditation in 2006 and has retained it since. However, challenges persist for non-U.S. programs seeking accreditation from U.S.-based bodies, as explored in de Villiers and Matthee (2009).

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in developing countries often struggle with declining economic impact due to quality constraints. A PhD study (Kagondou, 2015) assessing Quality Assurance Practices (QAPs) in Kenyan HEIs identified gaps in eight quality dimensions—particularly research—alongside challenges like inadequate resources and weak administrative commitment, proposing improvements based on global best practices. Similarly, research on Ethiopia's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system (Baraki et al., 2016) analyzed data from 184 heads and 547 trainees across 40 institutions, noting improved pass rates (14.3% to 61.7%) and alignment with competence-based principles, though issues like assessor misconduct and resource shortages remain, prompting recommendations for corrective measures.

Efforts to enhance global competitiveness through accreditation are also underway at the International University of Rabat (UIR), which is pursuing ABET accreditation for its Computer Science program. A study (Algieri et al., 2021) using surveys and curriculum mapping identified structural gaps, recommending better faculty assessment tools and increased awareness of ABET's value. Meanwhile, an analysis of ABET accreditation in Arab countries (Marzouk, 2021) revealed 358 accredited programs (mostly bachelor's) across 11 nations as of 2017, with Saudi Arabia leading in volume and Bahrain in per-capita accreditation (4.91), while Morocco lagged (0.05).

Institutional self-assessment is equally critical, as highlighted by research (Tefera, 2021) evaluating Addis Ababa Institute of Technology's School of Civil and Environmental Engineering. Using an adapted HEQAM-KAU framework, the study recommended establishing an internal quality assurance unit and regular self-evaluations to strengthen quality initiatives. Finally, with only four African countries holding ABET-accredited programs by early 2022, a study (Greenlaw & Mufeti, 2022) assessed the University of Namibia's Computer Science program against ABET criteria, offering a replicable methodology for other institutions while stressing the need for faculty engagement, administrative support, and tailored adjustments to meet accreditation standards.

2. Related Work

Research into ABET accreditation in Saudi Arabia indicates distinct trends within the country, both at the institutional and regional levels. A 2015 study (Faiz & Almutairi, 2015) found that Saudi Arabia uniquely concentrated ABET-accredited programs in specialized fields (like

aerospace engineering and biomedical technology) compared to other GCC nations. By 2021, the number of accredited bachelor's programs had tripled (Faiz & Almutairi, 2021), with King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals (KFUPM) remaining the only institution with ABET accreditation across all degree levels. Saudi Arabia also has a range of quality assurance studies, from individual course evaluations to broader program assessments (Faiz et al., 2014; Faiz & Almutairi, 2015, 2021; Faiz, 2023). Recent comparative studies of ABET-accredited programs in GCC and non-GCC Muslim-majority countries (Faiz et al., 2025a, 2025b, 2025c) share a similar research methodology to this study.

We identified five countries in Africa with active ABET-accredited programs: Egypt, Ethiopia, Morocco, South Africa, and Tunisia. Among all other African countries, only Kenya had a few historically ABET-accredited programs.

However, research on ABET in African countries faces three main limitations: (1) it often focuses on single institutions or countries; (2) it relies heavily on faculty case studies about accreditation processes; and (3) it lacks comprehensive cross-country comparisons. This study addresses this gap through a comprehensive cross-country analysis of ABET-accredited programs in Africa.

3. Comparative Analysis

The data in Table 1 (ABET, n.d.) shows the number of ABET-accredited programs in African countries as of 2025. The data reveals that none of the six listed countries offer ABET-accredited associate or master's degree programs. Egypt has the highest number of ABET-accredited bachelor's degree programs, while Ethiopia and Tunisia each have four. Kenya is the only country among the six without any currently active ABET-accredited programs. However, it remains on the list due to its past accreditation of two bachelor's programs.

Table 1. Number of active ABET-accredited programs in African countries (2025)

Countries	Associate	Bachelor's	Master's
Egypt	0	45	0
Ethiopia	0	4	0
Kenya	0	0	0
Morocco	0	3	0
South Africa	0	1	0
Tunisia	0	4	0
Total	0	57	0

The concentration of 45 out of 57 (78.95%) accredited programs in Egypt is striking. This dominance can likely be attributed to several factors, including Egypt's larger higher education system, its longer history of engagement with international accreditation bodies, and strategic national policies aimed at enhancing the global competitiveness of its

universities. In contrast, the lower numbers in other nations may reflect later adoption of ABET standards, smaller pools of engineering and technology programs, or different national accreditation priorities.

The data in Table 2 (ABET, n.d.) shows the number of HEIs offering ABET-accredited programs in African countries as of 2025. While Ethiopia and Tunisia have the same number of ABET-accredited bachelor's degree programs, the data show that Tunisia has two institutions offering these programs compared to Ethiopia's one.

The distribution of programs across institutions reveals distinct strategic approaches to quality assurance, with Ethiopia employing a focused, center-of-excellence model by concentrating all four of its programs within Bahir Dar University, while Tunisia pursues a more decentralized strategy by distributing its programs across two institutions. Egypt's model combines both breadth and depth, involving nine institutions in total, with the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport acting as a powerhouse by offering twenty-four ABET-accredited bachelor's degree programs across its three campuses.

Table 2. Number of HEIs offering ABET-accredited programs in African countries (2025)

Countries	Associate	Bachelor's	Master's
Egypt	0	9	0
Ethiopia	0	1	0
Kenya	0	0	0
Morocco	0	1	0
South Africa	0	1	0
Tunisia	0	2	0
Total	0	14	0

The data in Table 3 (ABET, n.d.) shows the number of ABET-accredited programs in African countries with international mutual recognition agreements as of 2025. The data show that none of these countries have such agreements for associate or master's degree programs, as no ABET-accredited programs exist at these levels. At the bachelor's level, Egypt has the highest number of ABET-accredited programs with international recognition. Morocco and South Africa each have one recognized program. Notably, all twelve ABET-accredited bachelor's degree programs in these countries are recognized exclusively under the Seoul Accord, as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of ABET-accredited programs covered by international mutual recognition agreements in African countries (2025)

Countries	Associate	Bachelor's	Master's
Egypt	0	10	0
Ethiopia	0	0	0
Kenya	0	0	0
Morocco	0	1	0
South Africa	0	1	0
Tunisia	0	0	0
Total	0	12	0

The fact that only 12 out of 57 programs (21.05%) hold international recognition under the Seoul Accord is significant. This suggests that while many programs meet ABET's general criteria, a smaller subset has chosen to pursue and successfully meet the additional, specific requirements of this international accord, which is focused on computing and IT-related programs. This may reflect regional labor market demands or the strategic priorities of the specific computing and IT departments within these universities.

The data in Table 4 (ABET, n.d.) shows the accreditation commissions responsible for ABET-accredited programs in African countries as of 2025. The table indicates that three ABET accreditation commissions oversee bachelor's degree programs in these countries: the Applied and Natural Science Accreditation Commission (ANSAC), the Computing Accreditation Commission (CAC), and the Engineering Accreditation Commission (EAC). Notably, none of the six countries have ETAC-accredited programs.

Table 4. Recognized accreditation commissions overseeing ABET-accredited programs in African countries (2025)

Countries	Associate	Bachelor's	Master's
Egypt	-	ANSAC, CAC, EAC	-
Ethiopia	-	EAC	-
Kenya	-	-	-
Morocco	-	CAC, EAC	-
South Africa	-	CAC	-
Tunisia	-	EAC	-

The data in Table 5 (ABET, n.d.) shows the number of ABET-accredited programs under ANSAC in African countries as of 2025. The data show that Egypt is the only country in the region with ANSAC-accredited bachelor's degree programs.

Table 5. Number of ANSAC-evaluated ABET-accredited programs in African countries (2025)

Countries	Associate	Bachelor's	Master's
Egypt	0	3	0
Ethiopia	0	0	0
Kenya	0	0	0
Morocco	0	0	0
South Africa	0	0	0
Tunisia	0	0	0
Total	0	3	0

The data in Table 6 (ABET, n.d.) shows the number of ABET-accredited programs under CAC in African countries as of 2025. The data show that Egypt has the highest number of CAC-accredited bachelor's degree programs, while Morocco and South Africa each have one.

Table 6. Number of CAC-evaluated ABET-accredited programs in African countries (2025)

Countries	Associate	Bachelor's	Master's
Egypt	0	10	0
Ethiopia	0	0	0
Kenya	0	0	0
Morocco	0	1	0
South Africa	0	1	0
Tunisia	0	0	0
Total	0	12	0

The data in Table 7 (ABET, n.d.) shows the number of ABET-accredited programs under EAC in African countries as of 2025. The data show that Egypt has the highest number of EAC-accredited bachelor's degree programs, while Ethiopia and Tunisia have an equal number of such programs.

Table 7. Number of EAC-evaluated ABET-accredited programs in African countries (2025)

Countries	Associate	Bachelor's	Master's
Egypt	0	32	0
Ethiopia	0	4	0
Kenya	0	0	0
Morocco	0	2	0
South Africa	0	0	0
Tunisia	0	4	0
Total	0	42	0

The data in Table 8 (ABET, n.d.) shows historically ABET-accredited programs in African countries as of 2025. Kenya is the only country in the region with two historically ABET-accredited bachelor's degree programs. The remaining five countries have all maintained their accreditation status without any lapses.

Table 8. Historically ABET-accredited programs in African countries (2025)

Countries	Associate	Bachelor's	Master's
Egypt	0	0	0
Ethiopia	0	0	0
Kenya	0	2	0
Morocco	0	0	0
South Africa	0	0	0
Tunisia	0	0	0
Total	0	2	0

The data in Table 9 (ABET, n.d.) shows the number of HEIs with historically ABET-accredited programs in African countries as of 2025. The United States International University, located in Nairobi, Kenya, previously hosted ABET-accredited bachelor's degree programs in Civil Engineering until the mid-1990s.

Table 9. Institutions with historical ABET accreditation in African countries (2025)

Countries	Associate	Bachelor's	Master's
Egypt	0	0	0
Ethiopia	0	0	0
Kenya	0	1	0
Morocco	0	0	0
South Africa	0	0	0
Tunisia	0	0	0
Total	0	1	0

Kenya's status as the only country with lapsed ABET accreditation highlights the challenges of sustaining accreditation over the long term. The loss of accreditation at the United States International University in the mid-1990s could be attributed to factors such as insufficient continuous investment, shifting institutional priorities, or difficulties in maintaining the rigorous cycle of self-study and improvement required by ABET. This case serves as a critical reminder that achieving accreditation is only the first step; maintaining it requires enduring institutional commitment and resources.

Figure 1 illustrates the dominance of Egypt in ABET-accredited programs across Africa. The data indicate that Egypt accounts for over 78% of ABET-accredited bachelor's degree programs, significantly more than the other five countries combined.

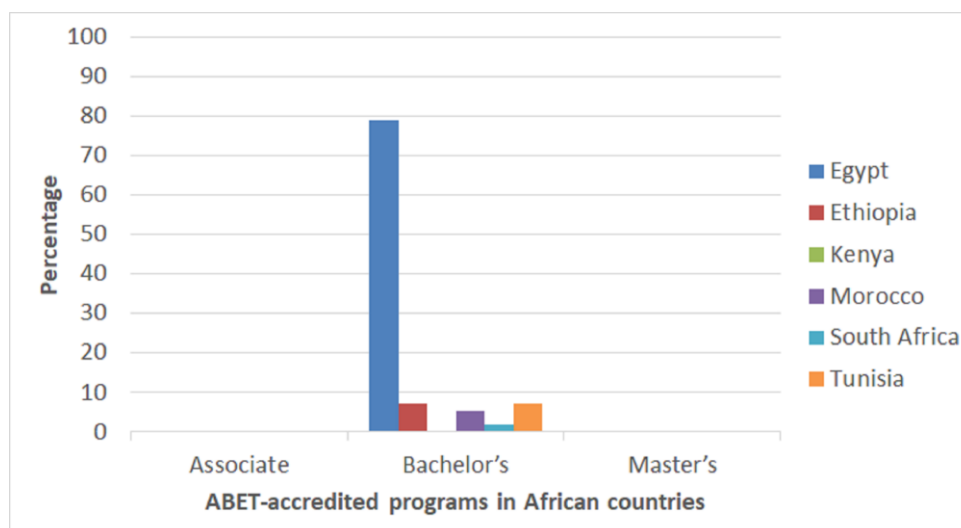


Figure 1. Percentage of ABET-accredited programs in African countries (2025)

Figure 2 displays the distribution of historically accredited programs, emphasizing Kenya's unique status. The data show that Kenya is the only country with previously ABET-accredited bachelor's degree programs. Kenya appears as 100% in the figure because none of the other five countries included in the comparison have ever lost their accreditation status.

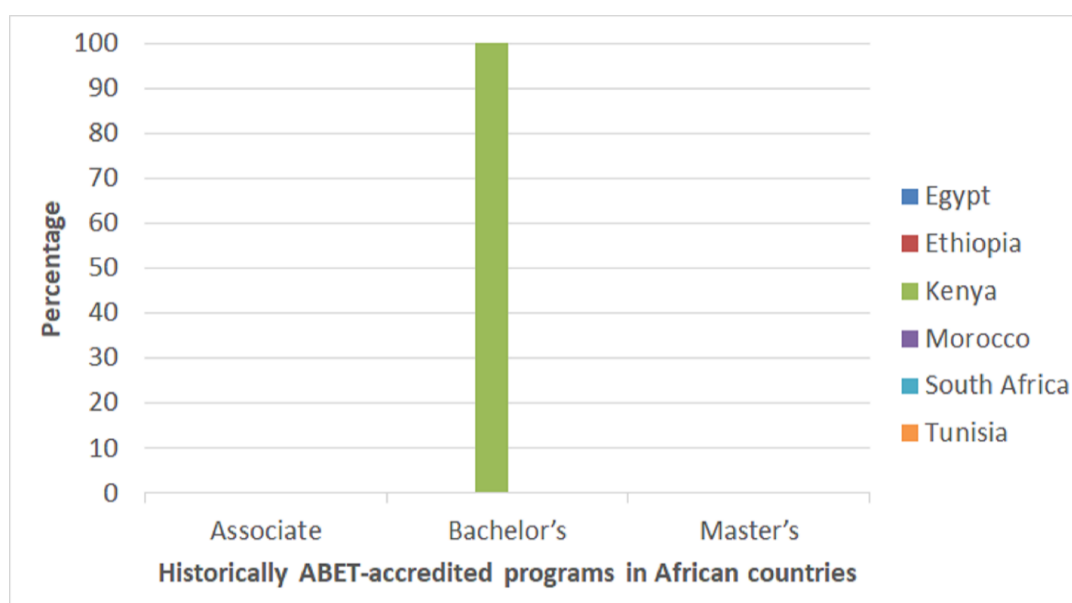


Figure 2. Percentage of historically ABET-accredited programs in African countries (2025)

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study is the first to comprehensively review ABET-accredited programs across African countries. Key findings reveal a landscape dominated by Egypt, which accounts for 78.95% of the region's ABET-accredited bachelor's programs, while none of the six examined nations offer accredited associate or master's degrees. Furthermore, only 21.05% of bachelor's programs maintain international mutual recognition agreements, specifically the Seoul Accord. Historically, Kenya stands alone as the only country to have hosted programs that subsequently lost their accredited status.

Based on these findings, we propose the following targeted recommendations for various stakeholders to enhance the reach, impact, and sustainability of ABET accreditation in Africa:

- **For Universities and Academic Departments:** Programs should not stop at achieving initial accreditation. Instead, they should strategically pursue mutual recognition agreements like the Seoul Accord to enhance graduate mobility and employability. Institutions should also learn from the case of Kenya by establishing robust, permanent internal quality assurance units to ensure continuous compliance and prevent accreditation lapse, rather than treating it as a one-time achievement.
- **For National Policymakers and Accrediting Bodies:** To counter the high concentration of accredited programs in a single country, national governments and regional educational bodies in other African nations could develop funding schemes and policy frameworks that incentivize top-tier universities to seek international accreditation. This would help bridge the quality assurance gap and improve global competitiveness.
- **For ABET and International Accreditation Bodies:** ABET could consider developing more targeted outreach and support programs for African institutions, potentially offering workshops or resources that address common challenges identified in this region. Simplifying or contextualizing certain processes for institutions in developing economies could lower the barrier to entry and help sustain accreditation.

While this research focuses exclusively on African countries, its findings and the proposed recommendations may offer valuable insights for other developing regions with a small but growing number of ABET-accredited programs. Future research should qualitatively investigate the specific drivers of success in Egypt and the reasons for accreditation lapse in Kenya to provide deeper, transferable lessons.

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