

Report of the Accreditation Task Force:
Building Agreement On
An Accreditation System for Educator Preparation
May 2008

CONTENT OUTLINE

Transmittal letter from Task Force Facilitator, Charles Coble

- I. Background: Effort to Unify Accreditation in Educator Preparation**

- II. Shared Values/Vision for Unified National Accreditation in Educator Preparation**

- III. Suggested Transition Plan**

May 1, 2008

Dr. Sharon Robinson
President & CEO
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For Teacher Education
1307 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005



Dear Sharon:

The AACTE-appointed Task Force on Accreditation is pleased to submit its Final Report and Recommendations for a Unified System for Accreditation to you. The members of the Task Force and the observers to the process have worked collegially and diligently over the past 5 months to carry out the charge to the Task Force, which was to:

- Identify common beliefs, values, and resources present in current teacher education accreditation approaches of NCATE and TEAC;
- Outline the vision of accreditation in teacher education that would guide the future structure of accrediting activities;
- Identify building components that would serve this vision of accreditation in teacher education; and
- Recommend next steps and implementation needed to achieve these accreditation goals for the education profession.

Three face-to-face 1½ day facilitated meetings were conducted from January to April, in which all members attended. Members also contributed to the success of the work by completing designated writing assignments in between meetings, so that the completion of the charge to the Task Force was cumulative and progressed with velocity.

The Final Report seeks to provide, in brief, the background and context within which we carried out our work. The most important elements of the report are the shared vision for a unified accreditation system and the recommendations for an implementation plan to move the process forward. Every element and word of the vision statement and the implementation plan was debated and agreed to by all members of the Task Force. No votes were taken, so this is a consensus document. We submit it to you for your consideration and with our thanks for the opportunity to serve AACTE and the profession in this way.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles R. Coble
Partner, The Third Mile group
Task Force Facilitator

cc. AACTE Tack Force on Accreditation

I. BACKGROUND: EFFORT TO UNIFY ACCREDITATION IN EDUCATOR PREPARATION

In early 2008 the Board of Directors of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) convened a Task Force on Accreditation to work toward a unified approach to accreditation. The Task Force brought together AACTE representatives with the two major federally-recognized accrediting agencies in educator preparation – the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) – and asked them to utilize AACTE’s *Principles for National Accreditation in Educator Preparation* in developing a unified approach to accreditation.

This effort arose from dialogue among AACTE leadership groups, including state affiliate leaders and other education constituent organizations at AACTE’s Forum on the Context for Accreditation in September 2007. The commitment to high-quality accreditation is part of the Association’s heightened focus on advocacy for teacher quality and effective service to all students, an emphasis recently confirmed by AACTE’s Board of Directors.

Representing AACTE, NCATE and TEAC, the Task Force on Accreditation held three meetings. Members of the Task Force (listed below) worked to debate and confirm shared beliefs about the purposes of accreditation, explore strengths of the two existing accreditation systems, and articulate aspirations for an effective quality assurance system in educator preparation. The charge from AACTE’s Board of Directors included these elements:

- Identify common beliefs, values, and resources present in current approaches to accreditation of educator preparation;
- Outline the vision of accreditation in educator preparation that would guide the future structure of accrediting activities;
- Identify building components that would serve this vision of accreditation in educator preparation; and
- Recommend next steps and implementation needed to achieve these accreditation goals for the education profession.

In early May 2008, the Task Force completed its work on the report that follows and now forwards this report and its recommendations to the governing boards of all three organizations. The report represents best thinking of the Task Force on a set of shared values that should guide the future of accreditation in educator preparation and the nature of transition required to support and implement that vision.

Task Force on Accreditation, 2008

Rick Ginsberg, Dean, School of Education, University of Kansas
Donna Gollnick, Senior Vice President, NCATE
James Rath, Director, Accreditation Panel, TEAC
Diana Rigden, Vice President, TEAC
Calvin Johnson, Dean, School of Education, University of Arkansas/Pine Bluff
Blake West, President, Kansas NEA
Facilitator: Charles R. Coble, Partner, Third Mile Group, LLC
Convener: Sharon Robinson, President and CEO, AACTE

II. SHARED VALUES/VISION FOR UNIFIED NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM IN EDUCATOR PREPARATION

The shared vision that is described in this statement should apply to a new unified accreditation system.

Purposes of Accreditation

The primary function of accreditation is to answer the demands of accountability and quality assurance for customers of the institution (e.g. candidates studying in the institution, schools that employ program graduates of the institution, parents) and the public at large (communities that expect competent, caring educators as a lynchpin of quality schools, a basic element of social, civic, and economic development.)

At the same time, an ideal accreditation system provides a formative experience for the institution, providing a vehicle for reflection and analysis. Further, the reflection arising out of accreditation processes should identify areas for continual development and inform planning for change within programs for the preparation of professional educators.

Common Standards

A common set of standards, on which the professional community has agreed, should be used to accredit all programs that focus on the preparation of teachers and other school professionals such as principals, school counselors, and school psychologists. National accreditation standards should be both input- and outcomes-oriented. Outcome standards address what education candidates know (knowledge), are able to do (skills), and are disposed to do (professional dispositions) as professionals working in classrooms and schools. Input standards, on the other hand, speak to such areas as curriculum, faculty qualifications, financial resources, candidate support services, admission and retention policies, and technology and library support for learning.

Evidence-based Decisions

All accredited decisions must be based on sound, credible evidence to support the conclusions. These decisions must be based on both measures of inputs and outputs. Input measures provide evidence of program capacity to meet basic conditions to support the preparation of well-qualified educators. Output measures show that all persons who graduate from an accredited program meet professional and state standards for licensure.

For each of the measures used in the accreditation process and in the day-to-day operation of the program, evidence of reliability and validity should be collected, analyzed, and used for continuous program improvement.

Choice

Choice is a value that must be reflected in the accreditation system. While meeting common standards is essential, the accrediting body should provide options in its procedures as to how an institution chooses to undertake the review process. Multiple approaches authored by the accreditation system should be honored for meeting standards along with multiple pathways for displaying and demonstrating compliance with standards.

Profession and Public Engagement

An accreditation system in education carefully defines its professional and public stakeholders (e.g., P-12 teachers and other educators, teacher educators, parents, and policymakers) and involves them in its governance system. They may be engaged in a variety of different ways, including sharing in the crafting of fundamental accreditation standards, policies and procedures, providing a broad and critical perspective, and creating greater support for the value of national accreditation for the preparation of school professionals.

Credibility

The accreditation system is seen as credible by all who are involved with it or affected by it. That is, it must fulfill its summative and formative functions with rigor; be based on current research findings; offer reasonable and fair decisions; and be cost-effective without placing unreasonable burdens on faculty or institutions. A credible system is also transparent in that its expectations and processes are clear; the basis of decisions are understood and fully disclosed. A credible system lays a foundation for future research.

Sufficient Resources for an Accreditation System

An accreditation system in education has sufficient financial support, staff, and resources to perform its accreditation functions efficiently. The funding plan for the accreditation system must balance the need for adequate resources without hindering the autonomy needed for making accreditation decisions and policy.

III. SUGGESTED TRANSITION PLAN

The Task Force recommends that there be a phased-in process to achieve a unified accreditation system that meets the shared vision set forth in this document. The exact nature and structure of this unified system is unknown. This transition should be monitored in its development over the next two years by a Transition Advisory Committee. Each step of the phased process would be informed by the evaluation and reflection on it by the Transition Advisory Committee. This Transition Advisory Committee may include the members of the Task Force on Accreditation, the leadership of the key organizations, and additional members to represent the stakeholders. The Transition Advisory Committee will be appointed and approved by NCATE and TEAC. The Transition Advisory Committee will establish a timeline and success metric. The members of the Transition Advisory Committee should be appointed by August 1 to begin their work in fall 2008.

The proposed Transition Plan has four phases. The first phase of the transition will be the development of a series of collaborative activities carried out by NCATE and TEAC with as many shared and joint activities as possible. An assessment phase will collect and analyze data on the first phase to guide the work of the third phase—the full implementation of a unified system. A follow-up assessment phase will collect and analyze data to refine and improve the unified system.

Transition Phases

FIRST PHASE: Laying the Foundations

Recommended Timeline: 10-12 months

The first phase will involve a range of shared activities carried out by NCATE and TEAC, which are guided by the shared vision. Some of these activities will occur earlier than others, some are more critical than others, some have not yet been identified, and some may not occur at all. This phase is to develop trust, mutual understanding, and the groundwork for the design and implementation of a unified accreditation system.

- Collaborate/negotiate on state protocols
- Draft a statement of accreditation ethics (including conflicts of interest, consultant ethics)
- Develop common definitions
- Develop a joint statement on the value of accreditation
- Clarify the accreditation alternatives
- Clarify points of similarity and dissimilarity
- Hot link the websites of TEAC and NCATE
- Develop and deliver shared presentations / statements of NCATE and TEAC representatives
- Ask AACTE to sponsor joint sessions each year at the annual meeting

- Develop a joint research agenda, including an inquiry into why some institutions don't seek accreditation and factors that encourage accreditation
- Jointly invite AERA to promote research on accreditation issues
- Participate jointly in AERA's new SIG on accreditation
- Consider a unified marketing approach on the value of accreditation
- Develop a joint statement that all preparers of professional educators should be nationally accredited
- Encourage the use of language on the value of accreditation
- Ask dean-alike groups and other stakeholders to sign on and participate
- Begin work on defining common standards
- NCATE and TEAC staff observe team visits of the other organization

SECOND PHASE: ASSESSMENT

Recommended Timeline: The NCATE/TEAC Design Team will complete an interim report within 60 days after the end of Phase 1 with input of and feedback from the Transition Advisory Committee.

- Follow-up on progress of first phase activities
- Analyze progress against shared vision
- Check on credibility with all of the stakeholders
- Establish timelines and guidelines for Phase 3
- Identify additional collaborative activities that need to take place
- Prepare interim report to NCATE and TEAC commenting on the progress to date and the recommendations for a unified system. Ideally the recommendation would suggest multiple options that are all acceptable.

THIRD PHASE: FINALIZING THE PROPOSAL FOR A UNIFIED SYSTEM

Recommended Timeline: 9-12 months for the TEAC/NCATE Design Team to finalize details of a transition into a unified system with input and feedback from the Transition Advisory Committee and additional time to implement the system.

Our recommendation is that the third phase of the transition plan would be contingent on the successful completion of Phase 1 and the approval of the interim report by NCATE and TEAC. The activities for Phase 3 could include:

- Finalize plans on
 - the governance structure
 - shared leadership
 - funding
 - process
 - staffing
 - marketing
 - recognition from USDE and CHEA
- Develop plan for transitioning accredited institutions into a unified system

FOURTH PHASE: FOLLOW-UP AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Transition Advisory Committee would write a report to the appropriate organizations assessing the extent to which the Joint Design Team has:

- Met the expectations outlined in Phase 3
- Addressed effectively the components of the shared vision outlined by the original Task Force on Accreditation report

Further, the Committee report would

- Identify further changes in the unified system for continuous improvement. On submission of this report, the work of the Transition Advisory Committee would be complete.