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Comparing and Contrasting NAEYC and SACS Accreditation

ELSA 731: Educational Program Evaluation

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe, compare, and contrast an early childhood departmental accreditation process from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and a college/university-wide accreditation process from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The history of higher education accreditation is also discussed. The author concludes by illustrating the need for further research in the area of educational program evaluations.

## Introduction

Research suggests that formal evaluations have their origins dating back to prehistoric times when tools and weapons made of stone were evaluated (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen 2004). From that time, the Chinese developed civil service examinations for potential government applicants and British sea captains used both research and evaluations in studying the occurrence of scurvy among British sailors (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004). The origins of program evaluation were developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the public's disdain of both educational and social programs in Great Britain. Early program evaluation in the United States can be credited to Horace Mann and the empirical reports he developed regarding education in Massachusetts in the mid-1800's. Historical events such as the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal Program, the War on Poverty, passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as well as evaluations of Title I, Head Start, and Sesame Street programs have paved the way for program evaluations as they exist today (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004).

Since the impetus of program evaluations originated in the field of education, colleges and universities began to develop guidelines whereby their programs could become accredited. Organizations such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools were established to provide standards whereby institutions of higher learning could be evaluated for the purpose of accreditation (<http://www.sacscoc.org/links.asp>). Accreditation may be defined as the act of

certifying a school or college as meeting all formal official requirements of academic excellence, curriculum, facilities, etc. (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/accreditation>).

Using institutions of higher learning as the lens through which accreditation occurs, this paper will focus on the processes of early childhood departmental accreditation and college/university accreditation. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation procedures will be discussed for baccalaureate and masters programs that offer early childhood education degrees. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges accreditation procedures will be discussed for colleges and universities for the eleven states in the southern region of the country. Both programs will also be compared and contrasted.

#### Executive Summary: NAEYC

The National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) was established in 1926 as an agency to accredit early childhood education programs serving children from birth through age eight (<http://www.naeyc.org/content/about-naeyc>). Evaluations are conducted by trained, highly qualified early childhood professionals who are familiar with child development, developmental milestones, and learning standards that are to be met based on NAEYC's criteria. NAEYC also accredits colleges and universities that provide training and guidance to undergraduates and graduates as they prepare for a career in early childhood education. NAEYC accreditation for institutions of higher learning originally emerged in 2001 and was revised in 2002 (<http://www.naeyc.org/ncate/standards>). External evaluators, often employed as faculty in early childhood departments in other institutions of higher learning, review undergraduate and

graduate programs while conducting formative evaluations to determine whether or not NAEYC's five professional preparation standards are met. If the five standards are met, the program earns national recognition and can qualify to become accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (<http://www.naeyc.org/ncate>).

According to NAEYC's Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation, the agency collaborates with various stakeholders in order to develop standards that professional early childhood educators should possess on the baccalaureate or masters level. Stakeholders, according to Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004), should be involved in criteria from which evaluations are based. Such stakeholders include NCATE, the Division of Early Childhood (DEC), the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), the National Research Council (NRC), Head Start, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and the International Reading Association (IRA), among others (<http://www.naeyc.org/files/ncate/file/initiallicensure.pdf>).

Evaluators who examine early childhood programs on the baccalaureate and masters level use a blended, or mixed-methods evaluation approach. Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004), reported that a widely held consensus exists among evaluators who believe that a strictly quantitative or qualitative approach is not an appropriate method to assess programs. Multiple measures of data collection should be used in order to reflect a more holistic view of a program. These authors reported that "...the method must be selected based on the evaluation question or questions one is trying to answer, the context of the evaluation, and the values and perspectives of various stakeholders" (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004, p. 305). When an NAEYC evaluation is conducted, external evaluators review information from faculty and students using

rubrics based on NAEYC's five standards for professional preparation. "NAEYC hopes its standards for professional preparation can provide something more valuable than a list of rules for programs to follow" (<http://www.naeyc.org/files/ncate/file/initiallicensure.pdf>).

#### Literature: NAEYC

As previously indicated, external reviewers use both methods of quantitative and qualitative data collection as a means to conduct formative evaluations on undergraduate and masters level early childhood programs in colleges and universities. According to Fitzpatrick, Worthen, and Sanders (2004), formative evaluations provide stakeholders with information to make improvements to the current program. For example, suppose an NAEYC evaluation was conducted in an early childhood department serving undergraduates. Evaluators have concluded that a particular standard has not been met regarding students' understanding of young children's cognitive development. Faculty at the respective institution could take the results from the evaluation and form a taskforce to create new teaching strategies and field experiences for students whereby programmatic changes might increase the likelihood of meeting the standard in the future.

According to NAEYC, the five standards that undergraduate early childhood education programs should adhere to include the following: promoting child development and learning; building family and community relationships; observing, documenting, and assessing to support young children and families; teaching and learning; and, becoming a professional (<http://www.naeyc.org/files/ncate/file/Standards061017.pdf>). These standards are evidence-based and have been designed to reflect best practices in early childhood. Evaluators utilize

information obtained from students and faculty, based on the rubrics designed by NAEYC and its stakeholders, in order to provide information to college/university programs that produce graduates who become employed in early care and education centers across the United States.

#### Analysis: NAEYC

Based on this author's personal and professional experiences in early childhood classrooms, as well as teaching undergraduate students in associates and baccalaureate degree early childhood education programs, it seems as if students are best served using the standards that NAEYC and its stakeholders have devised to maximize student learning. Although the reports alluded to in this paper have discussed the use of external evaluators to assess faculty and students' in baccalaureate and masters degree early childhood education programs, no information was given to outline the frequency of evaluations/reviews or the source of funding from which evaluations take place. NAEYC reported that faculty must submit ongoing documentation pertaining to students' performance over time, samples of students' coursework, multiple assessment measures of student learning, and information pertaining to ongoing improvement of the program (<http://www.naeyc.org/files/ncate/file/initiallicensure.pdf>).

Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) differentiated between research and evaluation. When reviewing their commentary about the differences between the terms, this author began to understand the importance and significance of both research and evaluation in NAEYC's evaluation for early childhood programs in institutions of higher learning. Whereas research contributes new knowledge to the field and constructs theory, evaluation is more purpose-driven whereby stakeholders develop criteria from which programs are assessed. It appears as if

NAEYC and its stakeholders used research from a wide variety of disciplines (e.g., education, psychology, sociology, anthropology, business, medicine) to construct guidelines and standards that are important for undergraduate and masters level students to meet when providing a developmentally appropriate learning environment for young children. Whether or not those standards are met is based on an evaluation of the program, or a professional's judgment regarding the soundness of the program as well as what improvements might be made to have a more successful and beneficial program for faculty, students, and the young children and families that are served every day. NAEYC has an 84-year history of promoting best practices in early childhood education. Faculty should consider this agency's record and standards when looking for ways to improve their undergraduate and masters level programs.

#### Summary: NAEYC

Thus, it appears as if NAEYC's evaluations are formative and conducted by external evaluators. Data are collected via a mixed methods approach and stakeholders are essential components of the evaluation process. Standards have been designed based on research and evaluators assess faculty and students in order that adjustments can be made so that everyone can "meet high standards...[to] effectively support young children and their families" (<http://www.naeyc.org/files/ncate/file/initiallicensure.pdf>).

Table 1 provides a visual overview of NAEYC standards that are evaluated for the accreditation of early childhood education programs in colleges and universities.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Standards | Promoting child development and learning                                 |
|           | Building family and community relationships                              |
|           | Observing, documenting, and assessing to support young children/families |
|           | Teaching and learning  |
|           | Becoming a professional  |

*Table 1: NAEYC Standards.*

The process of SACS accreditation will be discussed in the following section.

#### Executive Summary: SACS

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) was established in 1895 as an educational accrediting agency for eleven southern states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern\\_Association\\_of\\_Colleges\\_and\\_Schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Association_of_Colleges_and_Schools)). Although accreditation can be earned by elementary, middle, and high schools, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the SACS accreditation procedures of colleges and universities using the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement produced by SACS' Commission on Colleges ([www.sacscasi.org](http://www.sacscasi.org); [www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf](http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf)).

According to the Principles document, the mission of SACS' Commission on Colleges is "the enhancement of educational quality throughout the region and the improvement of the

effectiveness of institutions by ensuring that they meet standards established by the higher education community that address the needs of society and students” (Principles, 2008, p. 1).

The mission statement appears to be the guiding force behind the criteria used to evaluate colleges and universities for SACS accreditation. Both summative and formative evaluations are administered as judgments are rendered and suggestions for improvement are discussed (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). The Principles document discusses SACS’ philosophy of evaluations as evaluating a process and a product of the overall operations of a college or university. The Principles document outlines the eleven components of accreditation to which the Commission adheres when evaluating colleges and universities (e.g., accreditation is voluntary and renewable; institutions participate in accreditation requirements; evaluations are conducted in a peer-review process; student learning outcomes are assessed).

The peer-review process also consists of several tiers of evaluations whereby institutions are seeking candidacy or initial membership or accreditation renewal ([www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf](http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf)). Internal and external evaluations are conducted based on five standards and each evaluation is presented to the Commission in order to make a decision regarding a college or university’s accreditation. Standards for evaluation include the following: compliance with the principle of integrity; compliance with the core requirements; compliance with the comprehensive standards; compliance with additional federal requirements; and compliance with the policies of the Commission on Colleges ([www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf](http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf)). SACS accreditation is considered to be important for the 13,000 institutions of higher learning in the south because it signifies that

colleges and universities have the mission, resources, and educational opportunities to meet the needs of their students ([www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf](http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf); [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern\\_Association\\_of\\_Colleges\\_and\\_Schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Association_of_Colleges_and_Schools)).

#### Literature: SACS

As previously indicated, SACS evaluates a college or university's compliance with the principle of integrity. This standard is based on the overall relationship between the Commission and institution. A peer-review is conducted to assess whether or not the institution operates under the Commission's premise of integrity regarding decision-making processes, accessibility of information, and overall accountability of internal assessments. When evaluating an institution's compliance with core requirements, which also includes comprehensive standards and federal requirements, SACS evaluates issues such as the college or university's governing body (e.g., Board of Trustees); mission statement; curriculum (e.g., general education program); faculty qualifications; financial and physical resources; and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for institutional assessment.

An institution's compliance with comprehensive standards consists of more specific evaluations that are based on guidelines developed by the Commission for criteria such as: institutional mission and governance, programs, and resources (e.g., distance-learning programs, on/off-campus facilities, transfer and academic credits, athletics, admissions policies). SACS' evaluation of an institution's compliance with federal requirements consist of assessing standards including program curriculum, recruitment materials, and whether or not the institution complies with Title IV of the 1998 Higher Education Amendments. Based on specific guidelines set forth

by the Commission, evaluators analyze various federal components of an institution's operations to affirm that all federal requirements are met. Policies pertaining to the Commission are evaluated by internal and external reviewers who collect information from the institution's performance of the previous standards. When a decision is made and accreditation is approved, "The Commission on Colleges accredits the entire institution and its programs and services, wherever they are located or however they are delivered" (Principles, 2008, p. 31).

Skolits and Graybeal (2007) reported that SACS' evaluation of student learning outcomes began in 1998 when they "established institutional effectiveness as an accreditation requirement" (p. 303). Institutional effectiveness appears to be the capstone of the Commission's fundamental characteristics of evaluating colleges and universities for SACS accreditation. One of the characteristics of accreditation regarding "institutional commitment and engagement" (Principles, 2008, p. 3) suggests that evaluators assess all of the components of the overall operations of the institution in order to make a sound judgment as to the quality and value of the programs and services offered by the institution. Since SACS views institutional effectiveness as being important for student learning outcomes, institutions seeking initial or renewal accreditation are evaluated on the assessments they use in measuring student learning ([www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf](http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf)). Bers (2008) commented on the significance placed on student learning outcomes by SACS and suggested that "assessment involves not just finding out whether students learned but also using assessment results to improve learning and teaching" (p. 32).

## Analysis: SACS

SACS accreditation criteria are recognized as being the gold standard whereby colleges and universities in the south are rigorously evaluated. Stakeholders of evaluations include the university's governing body of officials, faculty, staff, and students, as well as the community and specifically the southern region of the United States. Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) noted that "stakeholders consist of many groups" (p. 174) and this statement applies to SACS accreditation, as well. Based on the five evaluation approaches as outlined by Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004), it appears as if SACS accreditation of colleges and universities can be classified as an expertise-oriented evaluation. An expertise-oriented evaluation differs from other approaches "because of its direct, open reliance on subjective professional expertise as the primary evaluation strategy" (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004, p. 113). Research indicates that one of the strengths of an expertise-oriented evaluation lies within the framework of self-studies (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004). SACS evaluations require institutions to conduct self-studies ([www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf](http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf)). Although institutions are evaluated based on standards set forth by the Commission, the evaluators have a plethora of knowledge regarding SACS standards (e.g., the role of making judgments). They also provide comments to assist institutions in making improvements, hence, the role of both formative and summative evaluations as mentioned earlier.

When discussing Stufflebeam and Shinkfield's (1985) work, Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) discussed four types of evaluations. Based on their research, it appears as if SACS' evaluations for accreditation can be classified as a mixture of context, process, and product evaluations. Context evaluations "define the institutional context, identify the target

population and assess its needs...[and] judge whether proposed objectives are sufficiently responsive to the assessed needs” (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004, p. 91). Process evaluations focus on both the process of the institution’s design and the continual interactions of members of the institutions (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004). Product evaluations provide information about outcomes and judgments of those outcomes to create both quantitative and qualitative data for stakeholders of the institution (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004).

#### Summary: SACS

Thus, institutions of higher learning that achieve SACS accreditation have met “standards established by the higher education community that address the needs of society and students” (Principles, 2008, p. 1). Although the process of evaluation consists of several steps, the accreditation is prestigious and college/university officials of the 13,000 member institutions must believe in its merit. This author believes that SACS accreditation standards are appropriate to address the needs of students, faculty, college/university programs, stakeholders, and the southern region of the United States. Through continuous assessment of program missions, values, beliefs, resources, and assessment standards, colleges and universities can produce more competent students to meet the ever-challenging demands that await the south and the world.

Table 2 provides a visual overview of SACS standards that are evaluated for the accreditation of colleges and universities in the south.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Standards | Compliance with the principle of integrity                 |
|           | Compliance with the core requirements                      |
|           | Compliance with the comprehensive standards                |
|           | Compliance with additional federal requirements            |
|           | Compliance with the policies of the Commission on Colleges |

*Table 2: SACS Standards.*

A discussion of how the NAEYC and SACS accreditations may be compared and contrasted follows.

#### Comparing NAEYC and SACS Accreditation

Thus, an overview of the processes of NAEYC and SACS accreditation is worthy of comparing the commonalities between the two agencies. Both organizations have been in existence for quite some time (NAEYC has been an early childhood accrediting agency for 84 years and SACS has been accrediting colleges and universities in the south for 115 years). Both NAEYC and SACS collaborate with various stakeholders. As previously mentioned, NAEYC stakeholders include NCATE, DEC, CEC, NICHHD, and Head Start. SACS' stakeholders include college and university governing officials, faculty, staff, students, communities, and the southern region of the United States. NAEYC and SACS rely on mixed-methods evaluation approaches, using both quantitative and qualitative sources of data collection from which information is

gathered. Ongoing documentation is an essential component of both NAEYC and SACS evaluation procedures and self-studies are also important in order for departments and institutions of higher learning to measure progress over time. According to Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004), a “self-study offers potentially great payoffs, frequently yielding far more important discoveries and benefits than does the later accreditation site visit” (p. 123); however, both are important in the overall evaluation of the program. Departments and institutions volunteer for NAEYC or SACS accreditation as both processes are voluntary and not mandatory. Additionally, both agencies use expertise-oriented evaluations for the purposes of accreditation. Research indicates there are several strengths pertaining to the common elements found in both NAEYC and SACS accreditation procedures.

Based on the research of Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004), it seems as if NAEYC and SACS accreditation procedures can be viewed in both a utilitarian and intuitionist-pluralist lens because of the mixed methods approach from which data are derived. “Utilitarian approaches determine value by assessing the overall impact of a program on those affected. These approaches have tended to follow objectivist epistemology” (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004, p. 62). Using quantitative methodology such as test scores or other numeric data, evaluators can assess both departmental and institutional functions according to research-based standards. NAEYC and SACS accreditation procedures can be viewed in an intuitionist-pluralist lens because this approach is “based on the idea that value depends on the impact of the program on each individual. These approaches have tended to follow subjectivist epistemology” (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004, p. 62). Using qualitative methodology such as self-studies and answers to open-ended questions, evaluators can assess both departmental and

institutional functions according to research-based standards, as previously discussed. Blending quantitative and qualitative data is becoming a more acceptable practice in the field of evaluation and future research is warranted on its use in educational program evaluations (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004). Research also yields information on expertise-oriented evaluations such as NAEYC and SACS.

According to Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004), expertise-oriented approaches to evaluations are “probably the oldest and most widely used [evaluations that] depend primarily on professional expertise to judge an institution, program, product, or activity” (p. 112). Site visits by external reviewers are common components of expertise-oriented evaluation approaches and both NAEYC and SACS require such visits. Originating in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, expertise-oriented evaluations were designed to address issues in education, specifically focusing on standardized college entrance requirements (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004). The process of accreditation for schools, institutions of higher learning, and hospitals emerged shortly thereafter. Research indicates two types of accreditation that exist in expertise-oriented evaluations. These types of accreditation are: specialized or program accreditation (e.g., NAEYC) and institutional accreditation (e.g., SACS). Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) distinguished between the types of accreditation by noting that “institutional accreditation [is the process] whereby the entire institution is accredited, including all of its more specific entities and activities [and] specialized or program accreditation deals with various subunits in an institution, such as particular academic or professional training programs” (p. 121). Clearly NAEYC is an example of specialized or program accreditation whereas SACS is an example of institutional accreditation. Table 3 outlines the comparison of both NAEYC and SACS evaluations.

| NAEYC                                      | SACS                                       |
|--|--|
| Long program history (84 years old)        | Long program history (115 years old)       |
| Expertise-oriented evaluations             | Expertise-oriented evaluations             |
| Collaborates with stakeholders             | Collaborates with stakeholders             |
| Mixed-methods evaluations                  | Mixed-methods evaluations                  |
| Five standards are research-based          | Five standards are research-based          |
| Ongoing documentation (e.g., self-studies) | Ongoing documentation (e.g., self-studies) |
| Voluntary                                  | Voluntary                                  |

*Table 3: Comparison of NAEYC and SACS Accreditation.*

### Contrasting NAEYC and SACS Accreditation

Although it appears as if NAEYC and SACS accreditation procedures have more commonalities rather than differences, a contrast exists between the two agencies. Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) commented on evaluators' use of metaphors and it seems somewhat appropriate to use a metaphor when initiating the discussion of differences between NAEYC and SACS accreditation. When thinking of NAEYC accreditation, it seems as if evaluators only look at one tree in the entire forest (i.e., the early childhood department at a college or university). When thinking of SACS accreditation, it seems as if evaluators look at the entire forest (e.g., the mission statement, fiscal resources, governing structure, physical

facilities, financial resources, federal mandates) of a college or university. Other differences exist, as well.

NAEYC procedures call for formative evaluations and research did not indicate the use of a peer-review process; however, SACS accreditation uses both formative and summative evaluations to make program improvements and judgments and a peer-review process has been established to enhance the overall quality of the evaluation. Although a commonality exists in the use of research-based standards for both agencies, it is obvious that the standards are different because each agency has specific goals and objectives for their evaluations, thus requiring different standards. In terms of evaluators, NAEYC requires external evaluators to review early childhood departments whereas SACS requires both external and internal evaluators when assessing colleges and universities. According to the research of Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004), programs might benefit from using both internal and external evaluators in order to provide a more holistic evaluation of the program. Table 4 outlines the contrast of both NAEYC and SACS programs.

| NAEYC                             | SACS                                    |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Evaluates one specific department | Evaluates the entire college/university |
| Formative evaluations             | Formative and summative evaluations     |
| No peer-review process            | Peer-review process                     |
| External evaluators               | Internal and external evaluators        |
| Standards are applicable to NAEYC | Standards are applicable to SACS        |

*Table 4: Contrast of NAEYC and SACS Accreditation.*

## Conclusion

Thus, learning more about NAEYC and SACS program evaluations has given this author a better understanding of the importance of program evaluations for both departments and colleges/universities. As Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) noted, “evaluation, properly conducted, has great potential for improving programs and practices in education, human services, business—in virtually every area of society” (pp. 513-514). NAEYC evaluations serve as examples for education, human services, and business. When early childhood department faculty teach students about the growth and development of young children, ways to work with families, budgeting and fiscal aspects of childcare, and the importance of developmentally appropriate curriculum experiences, students are able to transform young minds and help children develop skills that will be useful to them in the complex world in which we live. NAEYC evaluators are trained to detect examples of ways in which early childhood departments meet (or fail to meet) the research-based standards set forth by stakeholders and experts in the field of early childhood education. By participating in NAEYC evaluations, departments can provide their students with a higher quality educational experience which will be beneficial to them now and in the future as they continue to provide care and early education experiences for young children. SACS evaluations are also indicative of evaluating education, human services, and business.

When a college or university is evaluated for SACS accreditation, evaluators review student learning outcomes, personnel policies, and fiscal resources (among many other items) in order to assess the overall climate of the institution. By participating in SACS evaluations, institutions of higher learning can provide their students (and stakeholders) with an assurance

that the programs and services that are available have been rigorously deemed to be appropriate to the mission statement and overall goals and objectives of the institution (<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008/PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf>). Hence, both NAEYC and SACS evaluations are examples of ways in which programs can be improved for the advancement of social science.

Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) concluded their text by commenting on the need for further research about the profession and practice of program evaluations. “Despite great strides, it is increasingly apparent how little we really do know about evaluation, compared with what we need to know” (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004, p. 514). Thus, further research is warranted regarding the utility, effectiveness, procedures, methodology, outcomes, standards, goals, objectives, and other evaluation criterion that have originated since the field of evaluations first emerged. Based on this author’s research, there is no way to determine whether or not NAEYC evaluations are better or more informative than SACS evaluations, or vice-versa; however, there appears to be more commonalities rather than differences between the two. Nonetheless, it is important to view each evaluation in the context of the standards from which it is based. It is also important for both researchers and evaluators to contribute to the dialogue of both the practices and profession of program evaluations. In doing so, we can gain a better understanding of the processes and procedures that will be needed in the future in order to evaluate “programs intended to improve the lot of humankind” (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004, p. 514)

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