

Accreditation Models in Teacher Education: The cases of United States, Australia and India

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Abstract

Teachers have taken on a more critical role than ever before in our knowledge-based, technologically sophisticated, global economy, where educational dropouts and underachievers are consigned to secondary status. Accreditation's main goal is to assure that all students have competent, caring and qualified teachers. This article follows the *comparative method* in order to get a deep understanding of teacher education accreditation process in different cultures (*USA, Australia & India*). This comparison is historically embedded conscious of national differences, legal structures, private-public involvement and the type of accreditation being offered. A classification of initial teacher education and certification, aims & objectives, mission, governance, and other areas will be made.

Keywords: *Teacher Education, Accreditation, Certification*

1. Introduction

There is an increased interest internationally in procedures for the assessment and accreditation of teacher education programs. In today's political and educational climate, teacher registration and the accompanying moves to accredit teacher education courses are part of a wider accountability movement to assure better teachers and schools and to strengthen the quality and status of the teaching profession (Ingvarson, L. et al., 2006:11). The recent review of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (OECD, 2005), gave particular attention to initial teacher education. The OECD report points out that accreditation criteria need to move from a focus on 'inputs' -curriculum and teaching processes - to outcomes – i.e. what graduates of the programs know and are able to do. This is a means of encouraging diversity in teacher education. The report claimed that accreditation standards were more likely to lead to innovation and improvement if they

focused on clarifying the expected outcomes of teacher education, rather than stipulations about inputs, such as curriculum content and processes. Stensaker (2011) argued that accreditation is fast becoming the dominant method of evaluation in the European Higher Education Area.

In the *United States* where education is the responsibility of states, beginning with the State of Texas in 1994, comprehensive educational reform efforts were undertaken beginning with high-stakes testing of students to opening authority for the credentialing of teachers to private sector non-university organizations, to a comprehensive re-design of teacher education. The National Commission on Teaching for America's Future (NCTAF) recommended that one means of ensuring that all America's students have "competent, caring and qualified" teachers was through the accreditation of all teacher education programs (Murray F., 2005).

In recent times the *Indian* government has taken initiatives to establish a systematic mechanism for accreditation in order to maintain and elevate the quality of higher education in India. Emphasis on higher education in India can be understood by the number of universities currently present in India and the quality of education they provide (Sinha & Subramanian, 2013: 109-110). A recent Indian study (Dey, 2011) thoroughly evaluates the significance of accreditation in the Indian education system. The study reviews the outcome of accreditation exercises undertaken by agencies like The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA). They find these exercises have significant impact on improving the quality of higher education. In *Australia*, most Universities recognize that external accreditation of their preparation programs by professional bodies is an important component of a quality assurance framework. In the case of teacher education, the 1996 Australian Council of Deans of Education report, *Preparing a Profession* (ACDE, 1998), provided support and useful guidelines for a national accreditation system for teacher education courses.

2. Conceptual Framework

Typically, accreditation is an assessment of the institution's capacity to be a college or university—whether it deserves to be called a college or university (Murray, F., 2000). In the case of specialized accreditation, the question is whether or not the unit deserves to be called a college or school of education. In comparing the specialized accreditation practices of the US, Australia and India, the author inquires on how these systems are structured to produce the comprehensive judgment to accredit or not to accredit. This article follows the *comparative method* in order to get a deep understanding of teacher education accreditation in three different cultures. This comparison is historically embedded, conscious of national differences, legal structures, private-public involvement and the type of accreditation being offered. The accrediting entities, their aims and objectives, mission, governance, eligibility requirements, accreditation criteria, and their decision-making process have been covered in this comparison.

2.1. The Concept of Accreditation

Accreditation is broadly used for understanding the "Quality Status" of an institution. In the context of Higher Education, the accreditation status indicates that the particular Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) – a College, a University, or any other recognized Unit therein, meets the standards of quality as set by the Accreditation Agency (Sinha & Subramanian, 2013,107). According to Satyanarayana & Srivastava (2009) accreditation is a collegial process based on institutional self evaluation and external peer assessment which has traditionally been more inclined

to perform accountability, than to improve operational quality. In the context of teaching profession, Ingvarson, L. et al. (2006) indicated that accreditation is a key mechanism for assuring the quality of preparation courses in the professions. It is also an important mechanism for engaging members of a profession in decisions about standards expected of those entering their profession, as well as standards expected of preparation courses.

Basically accreditation today is both a process and a condition; the process entails the assessment of educational quality and the continued enhancement of educational operations through the development and validation of standards. The condition provides an assurance to the public at large indicating that an institution and/or its programs have accepted and are fulfilling their commitment to educational quality (Satyanarayana, N. & Srivastava, R., 2009). The result of this process is usually the awarding of a status (a yes/no decision), of recognition, and sometimes of a license to operate within a time-limited validity (Sinha & Subramanian, 2013,p.107).

In fact the underlying purpose of accreditation is to determine the extent to which institutions are discharging their responsibilities for realizing their goals and for the quality of education provided to enable the students to attain standards. Thus accreditation is the process of examining institutional procedure for assuring quality and assessing the arrangements for effective implementation of strategies for achieving stated objectives (Dey, 2011, 105).

2.2. The Value of accreditation

As its primary function is to assure the public that graduates from specific programs are professionally qualified and competent, accreditation can help to raise professional status of the education institutions and programs (Ingvarson, L. & Others, 2006). According to (NCATE, 2006) the accredited institution or a program encourages collegiality, reflective practice, continuous improvement, and collaboration among educators, learners, and families and, views teacher preparation and development as a continuum, moving from pre-service preparation to supervised beginning practice to continuing professional development.

Accredited status is a reliable indication of the value and quality of educational institutions and programs to students and the public. Without accredited status, it is hard to be sure about the quality of the education or to be confident that an institution or program can deliver on its promises. Similarly, employers or graduate programs cannot be confident that graduates of an unaccredited institution or program will be appropriately prepared (CHEA, 2010).

The following major benefits, as identified by NAAC are derived from the process of quality assessment and accreditation (Dey, 2011: 109):

- Helps the institution to know its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities through an informed review;
- Helps in identifying internal areas of planning and resource allocation;
- Enhances collegiality on the campus;
- The outcome of the process provides the funding agencies with objective and systematic database for performance funding;
- Initiate institution into innovative and modern methods of pedagogy;
- Gives the institution a new sense of direction and identity;

- Provides the society with reliable information on the quality of education offered by the institution;
- Provides employers reliable information on the quality of education offered to the prospective recruits;
- Promotes intra institutional and inter institutional interactions.

In the Context of Teacher Education, Ingvarson, L. et al. (2006) claimed that establishment of an accreditation process for teacher education has the potential to improve the entry standards of students in teacher education, enhance the quality of teachers and school leaders, and strengthen the profession by providing clear guidelines about entry to the profession, progression and career development.

3. Three case studies

Table (1)

	USA	Australia	India
History	First the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), whose roots go back to the 19th century, served as accrediting body for teacher education (Ducharme, R. & Ducharme, K. 1998). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) established in 1954 and Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) established in 1997 are responsible for teacher education accreditation (Angus, D., 2001). In July 1, 2013 NCATE and TEAC were consolidated to make the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) (CAEP, 2013b).	The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was established in January 2010 and is funded by the Australian Government. While AITSL acts on behalf of all of Australia's Education Ministers - state, territory and federal - it is nevertheless not a government department. AITSL is a company limited by guarantee, governed by an independent Board of Directors. The Australian Government, as represented by the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, is the sole member of the company (AITSL, 2013a).	The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) established in 1993, and The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) established In 1994, to assess and accredit Teacher Education Institutions (TEI's) in the whole country (NAAC, 2007).
Aims & objectives	The six strategic goals of CAEP are (CAEP, 2013c): 1. To raise the bar in educator preparation; 2. To promote continuous improvement; 3. To advance research and innovation; 4. To increase accreditation's value; 5. To be a model accrediting body, and 6. To be a model learning organization.	The accreditation of initial teacher education programs is a key element in improving teacher quality. National accreditation has two key objectives (AITSL, 2011): 1. improving teacher quality through continuous improvement of initial teacher education, and 2. accountability of providers for their delivery of quality teacher education programs based on transparent and rigorous standards and accreditation processes.	The main objectives of assessment and accreditation are (NAAC,2011:3) 1. grade institutions of higher education and their programs; 2. stimulate the academic environment and quality of teaching and research in these institutions; 3. help institutions realize their academic objectives; 4. promote necessary changes, innovations and reforms in all aspects of the institutions working for the above purpose; 5. encourage innovations, self evaluation and accountability in higher education.

	USA	Australia	India
Mission	CAEP advances excellent educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen P-12 student learning (CAEP, Strategic Plan, website).	AITSL’s mission is to promote excellence in teacher and school leader practice for the benefit of all young Australians (AITSL, 2010).	Stimulate the academic environment for promotion of quality of teaching-learning and research in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Pillai, L. et al., 2007).
Governance	CAEP is a non-governmental, voluntary association of parties committed to the effective preparation of teachers and other P-12 professional educators (CAEP, 2013c).	AITSL is a national body established to promote excellence in teaching and school leadership (AITSL, 2013a).	A governmental body, its president is the Chairperson of UGC, the apex body of the government of India. (Prasad, V. S. & Stella, A., 2004).
Eligibility	To be eligible for CAEP accreditation, the Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) must be accredited by a regional or institutional accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Edu. and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation, (CAEP, 2013c).	All providers of Initial Teacher Education (AITSL, 2011).	Any institution offering programs in education recognized by NCTE and having a standing of at least 3 years since establishment and with a record of two batches having graduated (NAAC, 2007).
Reputation	Accreditation serves as a resource for professional standards development in the majority of US states (NCATE, 2010a).	Accreditation can help to raise professional status and drive quality improvements within the pre-service sector (Ingvarson, L. et al., 2006).	Accreditation acts as an instrument for raising the quality of the teacher education system as a whole (NAAC, 2007).
Criteria	<p>On August 29, 2013, the CAEP Board of Directors approved new accreditation standards based on consensus recommendations from the CAEP Commission on Standards and Performance Reporting. CAEP has five standards as follows (CAEP, 2013a):</p> <p>Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge</p> <p>Standard 2: Clinical Partnerships and Practice</p> <p>Standard 3: Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Selectivity</p> <p>Standard 4: Program Impact</p> <p>Standard 5: Provider Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement</p>	<p>AITSL sets out the Program Standards that an initial teacher education program will meet to be nationally accredited (AITSL, 2011):</p> <p>Standard 1: Program outcomes</p> <p>Standard 2: Program development</p> <p>Standard 3: Program entrants</p> <p>Standard 4: Program structure and content</p> <p>Standard 5: School partnerships</p> <p>Standard 6: Program delivery and resourcing</p> <p>Standard 7: Program information and evaluation</p>	<p>NAAC has identified the following seven criteria to serve as the basis for assessment of HEIs (NAAC, 2013: 9):</p> <p>Standard 1: Curricular Aspects</p> <p>Standard 2: Teaching-Learning and Evaluation</p> <p>Standard 3: Research, Consultancy and Extension</p> <p>Standard 4: Infrastructure and Learning Resources</p> <p>Standard 5: Student Support and Progression</p> <p>Standard 6: Governance, Leadership and Management</p> <p>Standard 7: Innovations and Best Practices</p>

	USA	Australia	India
Methodology	<p>The accreditation process includes the following steps (Alstete, J.W. et al, 2004):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The initial self- evaluation. 2) On site visit by the team of peer evaluators. 3) Ongoing review. 4) The final decision. 	<p>The key stages in the accreditation process are (AITSL, 2011):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Institution submits application for program accreditation or re-accreditation. 2. Jurisdictional teacher regulatory authority and AITSL determine program eligibility and convene accreditation panel 3. Panel assesses program application and prepares draft accreditation report. 4. Institution reviews draft accreditation report and provides response. 5. Panel completes accreditation report, taking into account the institution's response. 6. Jurisdictional teacher regulatory authority considers accreditation report, makes accreditation decision and advises AITSL of the decision. AITSL publishes decision and accreditation status of program. 	<p>The various stages in the process of assessment and accreditation are (NAAC, 2007):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) On-line submission of a Letter of Intent and the Eligibility. 2) prepare Self-appraisal Report 3) On-site visit of the peer team. 4) The final decision by NAAC
The cycle	Five-year cycle (CAEP, 2013c).	Five-year cycle (AITSL, 2013b) .	Five-year cycle ((NAAC, 2011).
Fund	CAEP is mainly funded through accreditation fees paid by accredited institutions (CAEP, 2013c).	AITSL is funded by the Australian Government (AITSL, 2013a).	Universities and Colleges bear the accreditation fees (NAAC, 2013).
Additional Quality Assessment	<p>Each state requires from every candidate that they get a state license first before entering the teaching profession. To get that licensee the teacher should (Roth, D. & Swail, W. S., 2000):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have at least a bachelor's degree; • Complete an approved, accredited education program; • Have a major or minor in education • Have a major in the subject area in which they plan to teach. • Have a strong liberal-arts foundation; • Pass either a state test such as the widely used PRAXIS exam. 	<p>Licensing of Teachers in Australia – Initial and Continuing) (IRA, 2008: 20):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance Examination/Test: No examination for registration. • Probationary Period: One year provisional /probationary registration • Licensure Renewal/Sustaining: Granted full registration after one year of teaching service to meet the professional standards of the Board. Generally the full registration will be renewed every five years. At the end of the five-year period, certain conditions/evaluations must be met for renewal of registration. • Evaluation and Rewards: Informal evaluation is ongoing for registered teachers. 	<p>In most states, the promotion of teachers in government primary and secondary schools is either on the basis of seniority or seniority-cum-merit (IRA, 2008). Recently, The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India has introduced Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) with a view to improving the quality of teaching workforce and thereby enhancing pupils' learning outcomes. No one having a Diploma in Education or Bachelor in Education/Elementary Education can become a teacher either in a government or private school without clearing TET with at least 60% marks in the test. This test is conducted both at national as well as at the State level (Department of School Education & Literacy, 2012)</p>

4. Conclusion

There has long been widespread acceptance of the need for teacher education programs to be formally approved or at least endorsed or ratified at the various levels. Accreditation ideology is based on best practices in education. This philosophy promotes excellence in education through a benchmarking process, which is helpful in determining why the institution is, or is not, achieving its mission and broad-based goals, and in interpreting the results of the outcomes assessment process.

In most countries throughout the world, rigorous accreditation and licensing standards are set for teachers to improve teacher quality in order to provide the society with an effective, well prepared teacher who can help all students achieve their full potential and prepare them to meet the demands of a competitive global marketplace.

In the *United States*, as in many other countries, teacher education programs are governed by accreditation authorities, during 2013, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) became the new unified accrediting body for educator preparation, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). As the accreditor for educator preparation providers, CAEP is accountable to the public, the states, policymakers, and professionals in the field of educator (CAEP, 2013c).

These accreditation authorities specify frameworks such as the required areas of study, professional skills to be addressed, and the minimum number of days of practicum. Successful completion of such a course then allows the graduate to be registered or licensed to enter the teaching profession. However, additional requirements for registration or licensure, including standardized tests, have been in place in the US for a considerable time (Mawdsley, & Cumming, 2011: 25).

In *India*, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) came into existence with the mission to improve the quality and standard of education at different levels, as it was rightly observed by the Education Commission (1964-66) that the quality of pre-service teacher education has not only improved but has actually shown signs of deterioration (NCTE, 1996) (Dey, N., 2011). Thus; The Central Government appointed the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) as the academic authority to lay down the teacher qualifications. The NCTE, vide its Notification dated 23rd August, 2010 laid down the teacher qualifications. These were modified on 29th July, 2011. One of the essential conditions specified in the Notification is that a person has to qualify a Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) conducted by the appropriate Government, in accordance with Guidelines prepared by the NCTE. The Guidelines on TET were circulated on 11th February, 2011, and thereafter the Central Government and several State Governments have conducted the TET (Department of School Education & Literacy, 2012:11).

In *Australia*, Accreditation serves the more practical purpose of ensuring that the academic qualifications achieved by graduates of the relevant programs are automatically accepted for the purposes of teacher registration in all Australian jurisdictions. Providers may offer non-accredited programs, but the qualifications of graduates of such programs may not be acceptable for teacher registration purposes (AITSL, 2013b: 4). The accreditation process contributes to the improvement of the quality of initial teacher education and consequently of teaching and learning in Australia, providing a guarantee of graduate teacher quality and building public confidence in the profession (AITSL, 2013b: 3). Accreditation under the national approach is granted for a specified period (up to five years), after which time a provider will need to apply for re-accreditation of the program.

The term 're-accreditation' thus refers to the periodic review and re-endorsement of programs that have been previously accredited under the national approach (AITSL, 2013b: 5).

The *United States* has a decentralized system of teacher education and certification, in that each state is responsible for initial credentialing of its teachers. As in the *United States*, education in *Australia* is a state responsibility (Wang, Aubrey H., et al., 2003: 16). *Australia* has a federal system of government and is divided into six States and two Territories. The delivery of education is the responsibility of the State and Territory Governments. In some States and Territories, legal registration requirements apply to employment in the teaching profession. It is believed that better quality teacher education and greater consistency across programs will impact positively on graduate teachers' initial competencies (Ingvarson, L. et al., 2006).

Most states in *America* award an initial teaching certificate after completion of an approved program of required courses, student teaching experiences, background checks, and successful passage of the state teacher licensing examination. States set their own cut scores on these examinations (Wang, Aubrey H., et al., 2003: 24). The teacher licensing exam used by most states is the *Praxis Series*: Praxis I: Pre-Professional Skills Tests to measure the reading, writing and mathematics skills of applicants to teacher education programs. Praxis II: Subject Assessments are used as part of the teacher registration process in almost all states to assess content knowledge as well as general and subject-specific teaching skills and knowledge (Masters, G., 2012).

The initial teaching certificate, then, is valid for life in all of the countries except the *United States* and *Australia*, where a specified length of teaching experience serves as prerequisite for a permanent license. Thus, the initial or provisional license serves as an indication that the teacher has completed all of the preparation necessary to begin teaching. The permanent license is only granted after the teacher has demonstrated his or her teaching ability (Wang, Aubrey H., et al., 2003: 24-25).

As a federal system, in which responsibility for education rests with the states, *Australia* has more in common with the *USA* than with *India*, but here too are some important differences. Education in the *USA* is much more decentralized to local authorities than in *Australia*; and where *Australia* has 35 institutions that offer teacher education courses, The *United States* has approximately 1,500 Teacher Education Programs; most are four-year undergraduate programs (Wang, Aubrey H., et al., 2003: 16-17). In *India*, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) currently recognizes 7461 teacher training institutions offering 9045 courses (RR&TD, 2009).

Teacher hiring practices in the *United States* are characteristic of a decentralized educational system, with hiring done at both the school district and school level. Local schools are also responsible for hiring teachers in *Australia* (Wang, Aubrey H., et al., 2003: 5), Whereas; the legal situation in most *Indian* States allows for centralized management of the school system (Mehrotra, Santosh, 2006:272).

The Professional standards are designed primarily for the accreditation of colleges and departments of education, but they also define what is to be expected of newly graduated teachers. Professional standards should reflect a consensus about what is known and valued in the profession. All of the international examples of teacher education accreditation described in this article are based upon sets of standards that describe what can be expected in the work of newly graduated teachers. These standards are the result of long and considered processes of consultation and development among major stakeholders and practitioners for many years.

Teacher Education accreditation in *Australia* and *India* is undertaken by public bodies, either government departments or government-initiated agencies that make formal judgments on recognition. In *Australia*, The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was formed to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership with funding provided by the Australian Government.

In *India*, Teacher Accreditation is undertaken by both the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). These two national agencies are the outcome of the recommendations contained in the National Policy on Education (NPE 1986) and the Programme of Action (PoA 1992) (NAAC, 2007).

Whereas; in the *United States*, Teacher Education Accreditation is a self-regulatory process of recognition, of programmatic or institutional viability, by non-governmental voluntary agencies (NCATE & TEAC). During 2013 the two accrediting agencies were unified as one accrediting body for educator preparation, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), and of the 1,624 educator preparation providers in 2011, 667 were NCATE-accredited providers, and another 124 were TEAC-accredited, resulting in the accreditation of 49 percent of all educator preparation providers (CAEP, 2013c).

Teacher Education Accreditation in the *USA* has a long record of experience extending back to the early years of the 19th century, when the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) served as accrediting body for teacher education. Whereas; *Australia* and *India* have already made excellent advances in this area, especially through the National Frameworks for Professional Teaching Standards which provides an organizing structure that is being used as a base by state and territory regulatory authorities.

The methodology of the accreditation process is similar to a great extent among the three countries; after determining the eligibility of the institution or the program to get the accreditation status, it usually begins with a self-study from the side of the institution or the program, then a site visit by review team who scrutinizes the institution or the program in view of the premade self-study as well as certain predetermined criteria or standards, and finally the accreditation decision.

Finally, Accreditation becomes necessary for any institution looking for good reputation, recognition and fund from the government. However; accreditation does not insure quality or, by itself, improve quality of outcomes. There's no data that would compare non-accredited with accredited entities on the factor of quality of outcomes.

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