# Accrediting Nontraditional Education

## The philosophy of educational aspects of accreditation

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# PREFACE

This study grew out of the practical problems of curriculum development and accreditation preparation for a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) school in Indonesia, the Ephrata Evangelical School of Theology. The TEE literature did not adequately answer two questions, "What is the right way to do TEE?" and "How do I know it is right?" Accreditors need to be able to answer these questions, although there are many right ways.

The original form was a dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Humanities to the Central Schol of Religion in London. The first monograph edition was circulated at the International Council of Accreditation Agencies conference in Bangkok, Thailand in 1993. This edition has some changes.

The document is like a string of beads: epistemology, institutionality, curriculum, quality, program evaluation, accreditaton, degree meanings, and the definition of learning outcomes. Most of these are to some extent analogous, and some were much more developed than accreditation.

Most of the theory is still quite relevant although accreditation has generally progressed greatly toward a more outcomes-based view of education. The old ideas of process-based accreditation are increasingly a historical curiosity, and not many accreditors now work on the principle of "Books, bricks, and bucks."

The notion of campus and distance education being accredited using the same criteria and processes is now commonplace, especially since COVID and the widespread adoption of on-line education. Even doctoral programs are now more likely to be defined in outcomes. Most US accreditors now have their own degree definitions.

On the other hand, some old ideas have persisted into the new century. Institutions are now assumed to be providers that sell a service to consumers. Moreover, the US Department of Education still separates higher education delivery into four categories: campus-based learning activities, self-paced correspondence courses, distance education, and direct assessment.[1]

R. M. W.

1 Code of Federal Regulations Title 34, §600.2 s.v."Clock hour," "Credit hour" and §668.3, §600.2, s.v. "Correspondence course " and "Distance education." (CFR Title 34, §668.10).

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# THE PROPOSITIONS

1. Accreditation is the embarrassing "poor cousin" in the qualitative evaluation family.
2. Accreditation studies is such a conservative influence that it simply follows other fields of study.
3. Few accreditors could hope to meet program evaluation standards.
4. A great deal of unnecessary literature has been generated by playing qualitative and quantitative evaluation off against each other.
5. Qualitative evaluation should be divorced from quantitative evaluation.
6. All qualitative evaluations go through approximately the same steps, but their order cannot be made rigid.
7. It is impossible to evaluate everything about a program, but qualitative evaluation can evaluate anything salient.
8. It is more productive to learn what each model has to teach than to compare and contrast particular models.
9. The term *innovation* is often emotive and meaningless.
10. To say that a program is innovative might only mean that it is outside the traditional norms of its country.
11. To say that "campus" and "extension" delivery systems are intrinsically different is an oversimplification. They are more caricatures than real types.
12. The North American style of accreditation is not the only style.
13. The term *accreditation* can be sociological; it can refer to the attitudes of people in elite or accredited schools, or what unaccredited schools perceive them to be saying.
14. Most of the dangers of accreditation do not refer to accreditation itself, but to particular models of accreditation.
15. Accreditors easily develop a "private club" mentality.
16. A lack of trust between accreditors and schools might be the main source of accreditation problems.
17. The difference between extension and campus education is not a matter differentiating between schools and non-schools.
18. An "extension" school has far more in common with a "campus" school that with an "extension" non-school.
19. The difference between accreditor and school is blurred.
20. A program with an academic curriculum model can appear to have high standards, even the program is very weak.
21. It is easy to devise apparently revolutionary programs simply by manipulating curriculum models.
22. In the past, the academic model of curriculum has held an undue amount of control over accreditation.
23. In a worst-case scenario, an accreditor chooses a narrowly-defined concept of curriculum to the exclusion of others and enforces it as an accreditation requirement.

24. It is easy (and incorrect) to presume that traditional education has high standards and non-traditional education has low standards, simply because their systems are very different.
25. Every program has high quality judged by its own definition of quality. Schools naturally pretend that they are good and try to rationalize their programs likewise.
26. For accreditors, testing and examination results are not at all a suitable model of quality.
27. Any accreditation criteria that uses a number is immediately suspect.
28. Statements about the goals of education are more a conclusion than a starting-point in accreditation.
29. Programs tend to produce unintended outcomes.
30. It is unimportant that the findings of qualitative evaluation are not as certain as those of quantitative evaluation.
31. It is better to view the product and means-end views as a rationale than as a method.
32. It is debatable whether minimum standards can be good standards.
33. Self-regulation is a euphemism for a cartel.
34. Schools easily over-emphasize the role of teachers' degrees when making assurances of program quality.
35. Accreditors should not over-depend on consistency between their member schools as a means of determining quality.
36. It is odd that anyone would want to offer degrees with no structural meaning.
37. In long-term programs, the only lasting effect of some studies can be that the credits are still counted towards the degree.
38. Product can be continuing, not just final.
39. Degree meanings are subject to upward and downward pressures.
40. The meaning of a degree is an arbitrary convention used within a region or community.
41. It is ethnocentric an paternalistic to define all degrees in terms of a single Western country.
42. Number of years of full-time study is not a good descriptor of degrees; a three-year degree can be equivalent to a four-year degree.
43. The distinction between subprofessional, professional, and post-professional is blurred but nevertheless very useful.
44. The university caricature has sometimes impregnated the philosophy of accreditation.
45. Quite inaccurately, the scientific model of education appears "traditional" and the technological model appears "nontraditional".
46. By moving from a technological to a scientific model, a program can gain prestige without really improving.
47. "Raising standards" can be a euphemism for switching educational models.
48. Some research programs keep the number of degree titles to a minimum while virtually creating new degrees for each student.
49. Some characteristics of degree mills are quite attractive to nontraditional educators.
50. Some nontraditional schools will look weak no matter how good they are.
51. A long list of outcomes can hide program weaknesses; it can look very impressive without representing much knowledge.
52. It is sometimes easier to evaluate important program aspects than to create an artificially harmonious theoretical model of them.
53. One of the main tasks of accreditation is to determine the quality of students' knowledge.
54. Credit is a side-issue in accreditation; credit systems can be helpful, but they are not always necessary and can sometimes impede the development of good programs.
55. Not all good programs need a large research library; the presence or absence of a library does not in itself determine accreditability.

56. Quality refers to the kinds of interaction between particular kinds of people. It is not objective in a positivistic sense.
57. Schools come in very different kinds; many should not be regular instructional institutions.
58. A school is not completely autonomous if it wants its academic standards to be comparable with other schools.
59. Accreditors seldom adequately define educational quality.
60. No individual concept of educational quality is adequate in isolation.
61. Some schools pride themselves in their high standards, but they might be highly dysfunctional.
62. There is no ideal balance between hard and soft knowledge, because individual predispositions influence people's preferences.
63. Schools, not accreditors, should take the responsibility for defining and maintaining their academic standards.
64. Unfortunately, nontraditional education is an emotive issue, especially if it is unaccredited.
65. Different kinds of schools produce different kinds of knowledge, but they can still be equivalent.

# 1
# INTRODUCTION

Accreditation aims to ensure that education has that ambiguous characteristic of "quality," and regular evaluation should help a program to improve. Schools need a clear philosophy of quality and the means to establish and improve it, even if they do not choose to become accredited. Without it, administrators, academic deans, and textbook writers in nontraditional programs are often stabbing in the dark. Although this might hardly affect bigger schools with very clear internal standards, the consequences for small, weak schools can easily be fatal. They are trying to formulate stable programs without knowing how to develop adequate internal standards, while often fighting for credibility on another front. Most people do not function best in a vacuum. One alternative education program director put it this way: "Another [major problem] is the internal agony between the forces of change and the forces that hold the line, and the ability of people to tolerate the ambiguity of a new program. Frequently, they want answers even before you're able to ask the question." (Anonymous quote in Houle, 1973:123)

Accreditation also benefits students and funding organizations. Both need to know that schools have responsible financial and administrative systems. (*Cf.* Ferris, 1984:4; Ramsey, 1978:213) Prospective students need assurance of a school's quality and of the acceptability of its qualifications. This is especially important when they compare nontraditional education directly with campus programs, or consider continuing their education after graduation, or need recognition from institutions not formally related to the school. Ferris adds that accreditation helps classify programs into recognizable types, facilitating credit transfer, degree recognition, and interaction between schools. (1984:3) Some graduates might later wish to teach in formal education; degrees primarily designed for prospective teachers are almost self-defeating if they remain unaccredited.Admittedly, some schools can bypass accreditation because they have good reputations, which is sometimes better than being well-accredited. Having studied at an accredited school is little guarantee that a particular graduate is all that the school hoped he would be. That is, recognition depends to some extent on the person carrying the diploma. Some organizations are more open to accepting degrees and transfer credits from schools that they know are good, regardless of accreditation status, than to recognizing good schools that they do not know. In fact, a few unaccredited schools are so prestigious that nobody questions them. By retaining the right to select their students from the pool of applicants, graduate schools can have more power over undergraduate schools than accreditors. (Hefferlin, 1974:172)

Small schools with close ties to employers need no accreditation to place their graduates and get full recognition for their degrees. Many theological institutions are members of associations which do not accredit, but which foster relationships between schools so that they recognize each other's graduates. Besides, some graduate programs and many lay training courses

do not have to be recognized by anyone as long as the students feel they are benefitting from their study.

Nevertheless, many unaccredited schools might not really be as good as they are known to be; they might need to improve drastically before they could show that their programs are good and become accredited. The issue of accreditation becomes especially high-profile under certain conditions, such as when unrecognized schools (especially degree mills) sometimes proliferate and give unrecognized degrees. Sometimes delivery systems (the ways that schools convey teaching) change or diversify very rapidly, and quality control systems need to catch up. Sometimes interest groups become concerned about the present quality of education. In each case, accreditors are under pressure to produce guidelines to rule out short-cuts, discount degrees, and degree mills.

Kogan mentions that accreditation counterbalances schools' reputations. Accreditors can acknowledge the quality of relatively unknown schools, and review those schools with past reputations and perhaps adjust their status according to real achievements. He also mentions that evaluation is particularly necessary in times of rapid educational change. (1986:137)

**Qualitive Evaluation and Accreditation**

Qualitative program evaluation is one of education's lesser known departments. Unlike its better known relation, quantitative program evaluation, it aims to evaluate programs as complex wholes by using the unique criteria supposedly inherent in each; consequently its procedures are philosophical rather than empirical. Space does not allow a complete review of qualitative program evaluation; it is enough to explain what it is, how it works in relation to accreditation. (For a good introduction, see Patton n.d.)

A great deal of its literature is relevant to accreditation. It is perhaps fair to say that accreditation is its embarrassing "poor cousin," comparatively so outdated that the subject is avoided. The literature on accreditation is small and tentative compared to other aspects of education, partly because accreditation is a conservative influence which follows other fields of study. Much of it focusses on North American issues and is seldom circulated internationally.

Criticisms of accreditation practices are plentiful in the literature, and their contents are fairly similar. The unusual feature of Michael Scriven's critique is that he is such a prominent figure in program evaluation theory. He is particularly scathing, even using such words as "serious weaknesses," "farce," "grossly unprofessional," "pseudo-evaluative," and "extremely skeptical." The publication of program evaluation standards [JCSEE, 1981] has made it easier to substantiate his claims, because few accreditors could hope to meet them. Scriven's list includes the following:

1. The accreditor's handbook (if there is one) is a mixed variety of all sorts of criteria ranging from the trivial to the important. Criteria are not weighted according to importance.
2. Accreditors tend to use process criteria, even when they claim to evaluate according to institutional purposes.
3. They mostly lack a statement of ethics.
4. Accreditors do not look for side-effects.
5. They are unconcerned about cost-effectiveness and comparisons.
6. Teams seldom include trained evaluators so they often misinterpret data.
7. Evaluation reports are of "spotty" quality.
8. Evaluation visits to schools select only a narrow range of opinion.
9. Some standards are clearly inappropriate.

10. Schools can sometimes complete the self-study without even the knowledge of the teaching staff.
11. Re-accreditation is often a mere formality.
12. Accreditors can discriminate against good schools in favor of weaker ones.
13. Different teams of judges can draw very different conclusions about the same evaluee.
14. Accreditors do not seriously look at the performance of graduates.
15. The American system of private accreditation is loaded with confict-of-interest problems. Accredited schools pay for accreditation and provide evaluators for other schools; that is, they are both providers and recipients of accreditation. Not only that, accreditation evaluators and review board members usually represent a particular interest group, being conservative establishment people. By becoming a private club, the system is "incestuous," if not corrupt. It is really communal self-accreditation. (1983:250-254)

In fairness, most of Scriven's complaints are not faults of accreditation in general; they are weaknesses of particular models of accreditation and, to some extent, organizational weaknesses of particular institutions. Nevertheless, they are hard to ignore.

The qualitative evaluation literature is relatively small but growing rapidly. It is still not free from quantitative evaluation (an outgrowth of social science quantitative methodology), and many books contain both types. A great deal of literature has been generated by playing them off against each other, and it seems better to treat them as increasingly separate but complementary bodies of literature. They have different paradigms, methods, and types of results. In quantitative evaluation, the evaluator gathers numerical data on chosen program variables and then uses predetermined cut-off points in the data to draw conclusions. It is out of place in accreditation studies. It does not evaluate the whole of a program, applying mainly only to specific variables expressed as objectives. It can only compare several programs when they are similar enough for variables to be appropriate to all of them. It does not cover issues relating to what the people in the program think; in fact the approach can prevent them from talking, or at best, preempt the line of discussion. Its experimental methodology is too specialized, detailed, and cumbersome for an accreditor to impose on member schools. This is even truer for smaller schools which seldom have programs complex enough to justify them or the human resources to implement them.

It is quite remarkable that qualitative program evaluation has not yet greatly influenced accreditation. Despite strong roots in traditional academia, perhaps it is too new to influence greatly the conservatism of accreditors. However, change is on the way; Young notes that accreditation is moving from quantitative to qualitative program evaluation. (1983a:9)

Stufflebeam chaired a committee which produced standards for program evaluators. (JCSEE, 1981) Much of the work is presuppositional rather than methodological in that it is valid for many different models of evaluation, and it presumes that the evaluator has less power than an accreditor. It is hard to fault, and is generally suited to accreditation, although many accreditors would have difficulty satisfying its high standards. Its chapter outline assumes that a program evaluation will go through the following basic stages:
1. Specify exactly what it is that needs evaluation.
2. Describe why the program should be evaluated.
3. Specify who should do the evaluation.
4. Decide what information is necessary.
5. Decide what criteria the evaluation should use.
6. Propose methods of evaluation.

7. Decide on dissemination of results. Who should get the results and when? How should the results be announced and what form should they take?
8. Anticipate what type of impact the evaluation will have, including what type of program improvements they might stimulate.
9. Collect information and check its accuracy.
10. Analyze information and draw conclusions.
11. Disseminate results.

The means-ends thinking is quite obvious; the first two steps specify ends and the others specify means. It is worth noting that Stufflebeam did not specify that these stages were rigid steps. Even Guba and Lincoln's concept of naturalistic evaluation fits broadly with Stufflebeam's outline, although they add many more stages for finding and evaluating stakeholder's claims, concerns, and issues. (1989:185) Patton adds that prearranged procedures are the natural and useful way to adapt to complex situations. (1981:27)

**The Role of Models**

A model is a simplified representation of reality. It must be clear enough to stand alone as a separate concept and to make discussion easier and more intelligible. It needs to be concrete enough to be epistemologically valid; that is, talking about it is not nonsense.

Models are an important way of reducing complex issues to manageable proportions by identifying key issues. Generating models also increases the number of valid options and helps in identifying those which are unacceptable. In most cases, models occur as ranges (or dimensions) of options, and adding or subtracting particular options does not change the basic approach. For example, each school must choose one or more models of delivery systems from the dimension of delivery systems. It is quite possible to develop new types of delivery systems, but the dimension itself remains.

In theory, schools can multiply types of programs by creating and combining models. For example, the combination of a research degree model and a bachelor nomenclature produces the Bachelor of Philosophy degree, which is is a bachelor degree by research. (Creating something for which there is no precedent, however, is unlikely and usually unnecessary.)

Models can take various forms, including conceptions, types, and classifications. Some ranges of possible models seem limited; for example, it does not appear possible to have more than three levels of professionality or more than three options in the scientific, technological, and technical dimension.

In reality, models do not even pretend to be pure. The edges between them are often blurred or overlapping, and how many models there are depends on whether one wants to split them into smaller parts or join them together. In other cases, it is more helpful to know which models are blending than to extricate them from each other. Rather than trying to draw a hard line between two blended models, it can be better simply to appropriate any insights that each has to offer. For example, drawing a hard line between course work and pre-research course work is quite difficult, but there is little value in doing so as long as students who must do research have had adequate preparation for it.

In other ways, models can have extreme forms which are at best unhelpful. Some are identifiable by an explicit denial of the value of alternative models. Among curriculum models, for example, a humanist goes too far when he says that purposiveness and thinking skills are wrong. In fact many models have extremist forms, which are very difficult to mix. Caricatures are also a potential danger as models oversimplified to the point of distortion; they are no

longer an aid to accurate discussion. For example, the idea that ivory tower scholarship is a caricature.

When applying models to real programs, one can use several models at once, eclectisizing as appropriate. Combining models should create consistent wholes, not contradictions. It might be valid to try using one model in as pure form as possible, but it is invalid (or at least indefensible) to mix them in ways which produce what are demonstrably inconsistencies.

The present study faces a particular problem in regard to models. There are many valid models of almost everything important, and a model of accreditation must encompass at least all the important dimensions and models. By creating such a multi-dimensional map, it becomes easier to include not only many apparently radical models, but even to create places for models that have not yet been invented. In fact, the role of dimensions of models might interest theorists more than the models themselves. From such a diversity, however, the discussion can produce only one model of accreditation (even if it is a composite) as the basis for a methodological strategy.

**The Proliferation of Qualitative Evaluation Models**

Models have proliferated with little general consensus. In the discussions of Hefferlin (1974:165-168) and Ferris *et al.* (1986), there are roughly five categories of program evaluation suited to accreditation: process, product, value-added, expert accreditation, values, and stakeholderism.

In fact many more models are available, although not all are suited to accreditation; Stake (n.d.; 1983:304f) lists nine, but includes some quantitative models. Greatly simplified, they are:

1. value-added,
2. institutional self-study by academic staff,
3. review by a panel of non-experts who are highly respected by the general public,
4. observation of the social transactions in a program (especially with a view to pluralistic values),
5. instructional research based on experimental design,
6. goal-free evaluation,
7. adversary evaluation (following the idea of examination and cross-examination in court),
8. social policy analysis, and
9. management analysis.

To these could be added:

10. evaluation based on program decisions,
11. art criticism, which depends on the evaluator's experience, and
12. studies of alternative programs and opportunities. (House, 1983:46-48; Scriven, 1983:236; Stake, n.d.; Stake, 1983:304f)

Adding more types of evaluation is easy if one includes applied techniques. For example, Wentling adds follow-up of former students, employer survey, evaluation of teaching by either teachers or students, and cost-outcome effectiveness studies. (1980:38-41)

Even then, the list is not necessarily comprehensive, nor would comprehensiveness greatly enhance its value for accreditation purposes. Patton further points out the complexity of evaluation by listing twenty variables, all of which fluctuate with time and evaluation situa-

tions. (1981:26, 28) An underlying aim of the present study is to reduce the range of options to something more manageable, and later chapters discuss those models suited to accreditation.

**Expectations**

It is easy to express Wentling's ten aspects of evaluation systems as expectations of an accreditation model. An accreditation evaluation should:

1. have the commitment of the stakeholders,
2. help improve the program,
3. see the entire program,
4. involve stakeholders,
5. have a broad data base,
6. have a consistent method of recording information,
7. help people form opinions or judge the whole program,
8. provide feedback for decision-makers,
9. have a system that is adaptable to all programs which the evaluating agency will evaluate, and
10. be able to evaluate itself. (1980:44-51)

Concerning the second point, it is more accurate to say that qualitative evaluation evaluates any particular issues in a program that people think salient; it does not evaluate all issues. (*Cf.* Harris, 1990:39) The last point is perhaps especially important; something which is not expected is a faultless method. The need is for testable models that will produce feedback and improvement. Browne points out the value of understanding issues, helping the system to become aware of itself, and developing a coordinated plan as a basis for advisement. (1984:48)

A model of accreditation program evaluation should also meet some other expectations:

11. It should be simple enough for staff to complete the self-study without specialized training in program evaluation. However, program evaluations are not easy; even a casual reading of JCSEE's standards shows that a huge number of pitfalls awaits an uninformed evaluator. A major factor is a well-written and easy-to-follow accreditation manual, without specialist jargon, and with minimal explanation of its underlying philosophy.
12. It should be equally appropriate for many conceptions of schools, curricula, quality, degree levels, delivery systems, etc.
13. It should work across cultural and socio-economic boundaries.
14. It should help in deciding on the accreditation status of schools. This is perhaps the most difficult because it conflicts with the formative emphasis of qualitative evaluation; the issue is discussed in later chapters.
15. It needs to perceive the program accurately.
16. It should equally suit both large and small schools. For example, small schools need not do as much evaluation and committee work as larger, more complex programs.
17. It needs to help the school improve its program. (See below.)
18. It needs to account for unintended outcomes and side-effects.
19. It should not be unfairly manipulable by one interest group. This requirement is very pervasive because everybody in the accreditation process belongs to an interest group.
20. It should not allow schools to circumvent relevant criteria.
21. It should reach useful conclusions on the quality of learning in the school.
22. It should encompass a broad range of programs, not just those which lead to low-level qualifications. (*Cf.* also Shrinkfield, 1983:360; JCSEE, 1981)

23. Any advance in accreditation must also maintain standards which are high enough to support the credibility of the accreditor as an institution, of its methods and models of evaluation, and of the schools it accredits. There is no substitute for demonstrably high standards, and it is better for weak students to get lower qualifications than for schools to cheapen higher degrees.[2]

Most of these expectations sound more demanding than they really are. Perhaps the eleventh is the most influential because it rules out some very complex models which might otherwise be suitable. Some of these expectations, as much conclusions as guidelines, are discussed in later chapters.

**The Role of Culture**

Culture is a complicating factor in accreditation, and a philosophy of accreditation must be able to cross cultural boundaries. Even among Western countries, American-style and British-style education often do not seem to understand each other very well, and dialogue too easily increases misunderstanding. They use similar terms to mean quite different things and have differing assumptions about the role and objectives of education.

Nevertheless, at the risk of over-generalization, Western culture has a far stronger consensus on its expectations of higher education than that reflected in its literature. Although largely unwritten, it emphasizes structured cognitive knowledge (particularly analytical and critical-evaluative thinking) and advanced reading and writing skills. In fact, it is more a Western consensus than something for which accreditors actually look, and its pervasiveness is only clear when one moves to cultures that separate formal education from learning. This consensus does not easily cross cultural boundaries; some non-Western education tends to idealize a knowledge base, which it often conceives as a static body of memorized information. Proposing standards for staff, facilities, school organization and program structure hardly solve such problems. (See also Solmon, 1981:7; George, 1982:47)

It is easy to see why Indiresan says that acceptance in Western academia is still the highest goal of many non-Western academics, and the way to get it is by publishing in Western journals solutions to problems raised by Western researchers. (1984:272)

Of course some non-Western indigenous learning styles are equivalent or more effective than their Western counterparts. Too often, however, the trappings of schooling are divorced from real learning. In the worst cases, it is like perfectly typing a letter without having any paper in the typewriter; the typing is flawless and the typist is diligent beyond question. The only thing wrong is that the effort just does not produce anything. The student does so many hours of work with a qualified teacher, faithfully studies hard for the examinations (which might be based on carefully-written objectives), passes them, writes papers and even a thesis, and eventually gets a degree.

It all sounds good, except that the student did not necessarily learn anything. His examinations were based on rote, and to the amazement of any Westerner, he memorized many long and intricate explanations and put everything unimportant into his own words. It gave an impression of understanding and sounded very convincing when recited. Yet he could not an-

2 From the viewpoint of credibility, it is preferable that recognized, existing agencies take on the burden of reform. This is especially possible now that an accreditation system can include both traditional and nontraditional education without differentiation. Besides, accreditors use the same main steps for all models of accreditation and appear essentially conservative. (*Cf.* also Harrison, n.d.:14f)

swer many comprehension questions on it, and he has now forgotten most of it anyway. Most of his papers and his thesis lacked original thought and a clear focus; they mostly paraphrased the recommended reading. Despite having carefully memorized all the principles, he has not developed many original thinking abilities, and might not even know how his discipline really works. Most of what he really learnt was more by coincidence than by design, or as a result of practicums. In the end, the student does not value learning as much as his credits and his hard-earned, prestigious degree. It becomes easy to see, then, that traditional accreditation is not necessarily suited to all non-Western situations. (To be fair, it is worth remembering that Western universities have a history of attracting critisisms for depending too heavily of rote-learning.)

**The Task and its Scope**

On one hand, the present study is limited to private, non-governmental accreditation such as would be acceptable to the International Association of Accreditation Agencies. Consequently, this study as far as practicable excludes the particular problems of evaluating large government bureaucracies, government funding, and accountability to government. On the other hand, this study tends to use examples from the particular type of nontraditional education found in the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) movement. The locus of a movement is important because, as reflected in the literature to date, nontraditional education too easily evokes emotional responses; educators easily disagree on whether something is self-evident or adequately proven, or whether it requires considerable debate. It is also important because TEE schools tend to be small, quite unlike large and complex secular universities.

Perhaps for nontraditional education, accreditation poses pressing problems mainly because delivery systems are potentially more diverse than campus education. More importantly, however, the underlying issues, apply to all formal education. The challenge is not just to make up some standards, because traditional associations have amassed long lists of good criteria which describe the "best" processes, and nontraditional education could use many of them without change. Neither is the task simply to create more process criteria nor make up a separate list of criteria for "nontraditional" schools. (*Cf.* Hefferlin, 1974:172f)

The real issue is that present accreditation systems cannot cope with diverse kinds of schools, program objectives, concepts of quality, curricula models, degree definitions, cultures, methods of fostering learning, and qualitative program evaluation styles. Hefferlin saw that the need for quality assurance appears to conflict with increasing diversity. (1974:150)

How can an agency still allow schools to diversify into a wide range of unique programs yet still provide responsible accreditation based on what students learn? The question is philosophical; to answer it one must develop a model of accreditation which encompasses all formal education, including the probability that educators will continue to innovate and adapt. The philosophy of accreditation is different from the limited viewpoint and practices of particular accreditors, which only accredit a necessarily narrow range of academic programs. Consequently, the accreditation handbook drafted in the closing chapters is no much more than a discussion starter to bring a theoretical model down to practical reality; a model can have many concrete manifestations and it would be a mistake to set one up as an ideal.

The present work deals only with the philosophy of the subject and is not an empirical study. As far as is practical, this study is limited to the educational aspects of accreditation, although some non-educational aspects are unavoidable, most particularly that of institutionality. Some subjects are only mentioned inasmuch as they relate to TEE accreditation. These areas include specifically North American accreditation practices, many particular educational in-

novations, curriculum theory, campus education, and Programmed Instruction (PI). Space has not permitted a full study of the recurring and complex questions of values and ethics.

Another delimitation pertains to the classroom. Evaluation studies increasingly differentiate between the evaluation of instruction and the evaluation of whole programs. (*e.g.*, Wentling, 1980:16; *cf.* also Harris, 1990:37) It seems fair to assume that accreditors should not overly interfere with the teacher in his classroom, yet the teacher is responsible to use his class time effectively. Consequently, this study assumes that accreditation is interested in what the teacher is accountable for, and that evaluation of classroom teaching is an internal function of the school.

This study proposes a model of accreditation that comprises institutionality, classification, consistency between means and ends, and emergent agreement between stakeholders. It suggests that both hard and soft epistemologies are necessary and valuable. A wide variety of accreditors could utilize such a model.

The first step in doing so is to examine the definitions of accreditation and review the role of epistemology and some basic assumptions. The following step is to review the issue of institutionality, a separate but necessary topic. The section after that looks at the questions of quality and models of qualitative program evaluation in accreditation. The final series of chapters deals with issues relating to classification.

# 2
# WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Unfortunately accreditation has more than one meaning so the question is not an easy one. *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* gives two quite separate meanings which apply: "to give official recognition to; sanction; authorize" and "to certify or guarantee as meeting certain standards" (s.v. "accredit"). Although accreditation agencies ideally carry out both functions, not all do so. The former implies some form of government or professional recognition, which not all accreditors have. The latter implies that the accreditor has predetermined standards, which is not necessarily the case in accrediting autonomous government universities. (Ramsey, 1978:201)

Perhaps the biggest misunderstanding is that the North American method is the only possible method. Although it dominates private accreditation, most countries have their own ways of determining and certifying academic quality. Some governments carry out an inspection before giving permission to grant degrees, so that in effect no degree-granting institution in that country can be unaccredited. In other countries, schools can apply for degree-granting status and issue totally unaccredited degrees; they can then apply for accreditation (or some other form of official recognition) from the appropriate government agency. In some countries, the accreditor is a private organization which may apply to the government to get full official recognition. Some private international agencies do not necessarily have any government recognition, but have enough credibility to gain wide acceptance for their member schools.

In another sense, however, the term "accreditation" can have many meanings. Those below might all be the same in some cases, but they can and sometimes do vary greatly, creating a huge potential for miscommunication.

"Accreditation" might refer to the policies and opinions of leadership and official representatives of the accreditor, or their personal communication with schools, or the philosophy of the accreditation as they propagate it or as others understand it. It can also refer to the official consensus within an agency, either as the board's decisions, the decisions of the plenary meeting of school representatives, or the official publications, especially the accreditation handbook. It can refer to the philosophy of accreditation in scholarly literature. Of greater danger to rational communication, it can be sociological, referring to the attitude of people in elite or accredited schools to other schools. Alternatively, it might refer to what unaccredited schools perceive them to be saying, whether accurately or otherwise.

That is, "accreditation" can refer either to its more objective educational aspects or to the attitudes of the people involved.

A few recognition agencies outside the U.S. can "accredit" the degree of an individual student by special application after it has been completed. One government accreditor will issue a statement of recognition for individual graduates of schools that are previously regis-

tered with it. Another will evaluate completely unaccredited foreign degrees and issue a statement of recognition valid only for that applicant. In some cases, this is clearly the best way to provide recognition for some kinds of qualifications. However, this kind of accreditation can produce the anomoly of two students completing the same work at the same school and graduating with the same diploma, but only one of them being accredited. It seems to be a particularly unfair policy for general institutional accreditation, and is not pursued further in this study.

It seems simplistic, then, to say that there can only be one definition. For the purposes of this study, however, accreditation is an accrediting institution's official recognition of a school's institutionality and educational program as meeting the accreditor's standards of quality and accountability.

**A Few Near-absolutes**

Fortunately, a few things in accreditation are almost absolute. One of these is that an accreditor must be some sort of legally incorporated institution with a responsible administration. Another is the basic steps involved in becoming accredited. All voluntary private accreditation systems require a preliminary approach to the accreditor, a formal application, a self-study, an on-site evaluation, and a formal decision to bestow accredited status. Inevitably, there is an exception: accreditors which act as central schools (see below) can relate differently to their member schools.

Accreditation applies to schooling rather than non-school education. Accreditors share a common concern for institutional, financial and administrative stability, a clear educational philosophy, adequate staff, and clear degree requirements. Accreditors encourage (but cannot oblige) their accredited schools to recognize each other's credits and degrees. Accreditors usually seek recognition for their accreditees from other accreditors, government agencies, employer bodies, and professional organizations. (See also Brennan, 1986; Kells, 1986; Kogan, 1986.)

**Kinds of Accreditors**

There are several different kinds of accrediting agency, not all of which North Americans consider accreditors, but which act as accreditors in their own countries. First, many accreditors are private associations in which schools voluntarily become members. Perhaps the best kind is an association of equals where members help each other and have aims similar enough to belong together. Some associations, however, are a collection of small schools based around a few large schools which provide much of the resources, expertise, and coordination. Being so loosely organized, a few associations can have trouble functioning as credible accreditors; they do little more than share information. Each school has maximum autonomy but, with very little in common, even information might not be very helpful.

Second, an accreditor might be a government department. In a few countries, government departments accredit directly by evaluating and recognizing candidate schools. In other countries (like the U.S.A.), the government "accredits" private accreditors. Elsewhere, only parliaments can establish degree-granting institutions but they provide accreditation as part of the process.

Third, some professional bodies carry out their own accrediting function, mainly for licensing in their specialist field.

Fourth, anybody can incorporate an accreditation body and hope that schools will pay money for membership. In fact, many degree mills set up their own accreditors to give the impression of credibility. (Bear, 1980:28)

Fifth, another type of accreditation falls outside the bounds of this study; it is only included for completeness and because it has many potential applications in nontraditional education. In this type, an "accreditor" is a large school and each "accreditee" is a small, autonomous school which sets up a branch of the central school. Members teach and supervise practical training, while the central school typically retains control over curriculum, standards, assessment, and the awarding of degrees. In some cases, member schools may even carry out assessment, but they are accountable to the center. (Almost all theological degrees in Australia were issued in this way until recently; the theological schools and Bible colleges taught, and the assessment schools awarded degrees.)

Following this pattern, the combined resources and expertise of member schools create a large, strong school with maximum coordination, minimal reduplication of effort, and widespread recognition. Members only accept candidates for those degrees which suit their purposes and for which they have the expertise and resources. As the community of schools uses fewer degrees titles, the meaning of each is more easily identifiable.

This kind of accreditation best suits countries where only very strong programs can get permission to grant degrees; it is more common in countries with British-style education. In this structure, a new school can set up a first-class fully-accredited program from the time it opens its doors by riding on the standards and accreditation status of its parent. (See Brennan, 1986:151) In cases of schools which are very small or weak or have radically nontraditional delivery systems, the assessment standards of the center can assure the credibility of the degree.

It has many difficulties. The center's programs might not suit all its member schools, especially as the system has guarded its credibility by disfavoring practitioner degrees. Besides, contracts between the center and the member schools can be very complicated, especially if members carry out assessment or need approval for teaching programs. Other than that, members might be unhappy to lose control of what they teach and how it is evaluated, especially when the central school makes programming mistakes.

In a few cases, the central school's role is to tutor its members until they are mature enough to establish their own standards and grant their own degrees. In other cases, however, the central school might not be accredited, and member schools are not independent enough to be separately recognized by another accreditor. This is double-speak--the school is accredited but not accredited. Moreover, any school can become an "accreditor" simply by having daughter schools to accredit.

Consequently, accreditation can occur in several layers. A government department could "accredit" a private accreditor, which could accredit a school, which in turn could accredit its daughter schools. An international association could accredit a local agency, which could accredit schools that have daughter schools.

These kinds of accreditors can overlap. For example, the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) in Britain was originally run more like a multi-campus school, but now functions like an accreditor. Nevertheless, it still awards the degrees of the schools it accredits, and for this reason it refers to its accrediting process as "validation" until schools take responsibility for their own standards. The University of London is a school but in the past has been quite similar to the CNAA by accrediting daughter institutions. That is, the University of Lon-

don had taken on some aspects of being an accreditor, and the CNAA is in some ways like a school.

**The Dangers of Accreditation**

Some dangers are not real, but reflect a natural fear of evaluation. People dislike being evaluated because they see it as a threat, connoting criticism, change, extra work, and the possibility of bad news. (Dressel, 1976:5; Weiss, 1986b:190) Pasavac and Carey provide one of the best summaries of the fears of evaluation. People fear that their program will shown to be less successful than they believed. They can fear the abuse of information, or that their own qualitative evaluations or preferred methods will be supplanted with those of outsiders. They can fear that methods will be insensitive, evaluation will be expensive or will inhibit innovation, or perhaps even that the program will be terminated. (1980:40-46) In many cases, these fears are at least partly justified and contribute to a lack of trust. Accreditors do not work in situations which are free of emotional undercurrents.

Some allegations of problems with accreditation perhaps stem from bitter experiences with individual accreditors. Even a small mistake on the part of the accreditor, whether real or imagined, has the potential to generate a great deal of ill-will. Most problems do not really relate to accreditation itself but to particular models of accreditation and program evaluation, discussed in later chapters. For example:

1. Accreditation becomes a form of outside intervention.
2. It is difficult to mediate situations where people do not agree.
3. It often makes superficial judgements.
4. It compares institutions that are not alike.
5. It favors special interests rather than the public. (Young, 1983a:14)
6. Accreditation can unconsciously perpetuate colonial patterns by attempting to "maintain standards." Non-Western ways are considered lower standards. (Ferris, 1984:2)
7. Miller and Barak reported the survey results on evaluation of undergraduate academic programs throughout the USA. Of those that answered questions on evaluation difficulties, two of the most often-occurring responses were lack of resources in both personnel and funds, and inconsistent numerical data. (1987:27; see also p. 28)
8. Too much effort can go into evaluating programs. (Brennan, 1986:153f; see also Kogan, 1986:135) This complaint contains some truth; accreditors can easily overload small schools with evaluation procedures designed for larger schools. On the other hand, perhaps the real complaint is that evaluation often requires too much effort for too little benefit.

Although avoidable, some real dangers seem to be general problems of accreditation, not just weaknesses of specific models. Accreditors vary greatly; perhaps some accreditors are free of all of the weaknesses below and perhaps not many suffer from all. These are some of the most sensitive:

First, accreditors have traditionally tended to neglect skills and attitude development, both of which are essential in some fields, especially theology.[3] Sometimes they even go so far

3 Another problem is particularly theological. In their scholarly zeal to compare different points of view, some agencies have gone too far and encouraged doctrinal relativism. This problem affects theology perhaps more than other disciplines as it devalues theological truth and detracts from direct study of the biblical text. In some places, it has brought all theological accreditation into disrepute, and is often worse when a government department is responsible for accreditation, as in some countries. When rela-

as to redefine attitudes and skill completely in terms of cognitive knowledge. (Perhaps anti-intellectuals have sometimes made the opposite error of redefining all knowledge as affective.)

Second, accreditation is mostly a conservatizing force in education. Accreditors have too often been suspicious of nontraditionality, partly because they do not know how to evaluate it and partly because they suspect that it will lower standards.

Third, the CNAA has functioned as an expertise pool, and at least in the past, this has been one of its strengths. However, it brings the danger of a technocracy, where a group of experts develop a monopoly with no outside accountability.

Fourth, some accreditors tend to be elitist. The term is often emotive rather than rational, sometimes really meaning "excellence". A great deal has been written recently about elitism and the issue is too complex to allow a full treatment here.[4] It must suffice to say that schools can have pecking orders between them based on money, prestige, reputations, and ability to select the better prospective students (Kogan, 1986:126). Schools too easily think so highly of themselves that they believe that, "Nobody else's program is as good as ours." They become less accepting of degrees and transfer credits of other schools, even when they are well-recognized.

Besides, elitist theological schools can encourage students to think that they will become a superior class destined to rule over the laity. "Theology" becomes a secret knowledge which the uninitiated could never really understand. "Raising the standards" means that schools will reject more applicants so they can select better students and then fail more of them. "Successful" theological students face the added danger of becoming less able to relate to ordinary people. (Harrison, n.d.:15; *cf.* also Ferris, 1984:3; Dressel, 1976:274f)

As a result, accreditors easily develop a "private club mentality"; they can protect their elitist position simply by making it difficult for outsider schools to get recognition as peers. How much this happens is not on record, but many outsiders feel that it does. (*Cf.* also Hefferlin, 1974:157f) Schools can feel they have a right to mistrust accreditors which have a monopoly in a certain field but which do not accredit certain kinds of degrees or delivery systems. Simply by feeling shut out, some schools will feel this way.

These are problems of attitude and not of education, and a later chapter discusses them in more detail.

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tivism is an accreditation problem, evangelical schools tend not to seek accreditation.

4 Excellence is somewhat a side issue; it refers to encouraging students to attain the highest level of achievement possible. (Glazer, 1987:196) To some extent, it means that education must diversify because students can achieve excellence in many fields, not just the academic. (Bliss, 1988) Historically, it is a reaction to the mediocrity resulting from minimum standards.
Elitism is in some cases justifiable. An education system with a limited amount of places can hardly help but become elite when it has an oversupply of very capable students. (Beswick, 1987) Besides, the best students need elite schools if they are to achieve their best. (Glazer, 1987:197f) The emotive wording aside, equitable mass education cannot completely avoid mediocrity because it must maximize access.

# 3
# NONTRADITIONAL EDUCATION

The nontraditional education literature, the best of it often published by Jossey Bass, is mostly mature and rich with insights. Sometimes its own success quickly renders it out of date as ideas, originally thought to be radically nontraditional, very soon become real programs. (They then start to lose their aura of nontraditionality when they becomes stable, responsible, and credible; oddly enough they eventually appear conservative.) For example, the once-live issues of part-time study, satellite campuses, and mature-age students are now common practices. There is nothing new about open universities, extension departments, and high school diplomas and degrees through examination only. North America has a functioning credit bank.

A similarly helpful body of literature for the present study is that of distance education, with an Australian journal *Distance Education* being the most important periodical. The Open University in Britain is the major institution in an international group of government universities.[5] Holmberg defines it as those forms of study that do not have the "continuous, immediate" supervision of teachers on the same premises, but which have the guidance of a tutor. (1989:127; *cf.* also Kember, 1989:279)

For the purposes of this study, the kind of nontraditional education under discussion (and TEE in particular) has three main educational characteristics:

1. Students do not study full-time on campus, although some might spend some time there. So far, almost all have studied part-time.
2. Students get most of their cognitive input from self-study materials, of which many kinds are available.
3. Students meet regularly with the teacher, whose role varies considerably according to the kind of school. Students regularly attend seminars, tutorials or short periods on campus, or meet personally with a tutor. Class time, however, is not for imparting information but for evaluation, clarification, support, and reflection.

Each of these contain core values. In the first, the student for some reason cannot or should not study on campus, because either he has local commitments or it is preferable for him to study in extension. The second is a natural consequence; the student must become more independent in his study habits. The third emphasizes that the teacher still has an important role to play. In some forms of learning, interaction with other students is also essential.

5 It was also surprising to see what was not helpful in this study, like the separate body of literature on vocational education. In the same way, the writings on non-formal and continuing education were not consulted because accreditation refers to schools and formal education.

The difference between campus and extension study is indistinct, and a watertight definition of extension education is not really possible. In some schools, campus and extensions programs are clearly separate and sharply contrastive. Mostly, however, many shades of gray lie between the two types. The most campus-based concept of study is that the student lives on campus, studies full time, earns all his degree by learning through lectures, and depends completely on campus facilities. The idea is very attractive. Campus programs are highly tangible; a visitor can go there, see a name written up outside, expensive buildings, a library, students studying, dormitories, and staff. Staff and students can spend all their time teaching and studying on campus with few distractions, and they can develop real school loyalty.

In reality, however, "campus" and "extension" are almost caricatures as much as real types. (*Cf.* Bender, 1983:285) A great deal of unrealistic idealism has been attached to community life on campus; campuses range from emotional pressure cans to impersonal knowledge factories where students only show up to attend obligatory activities. In the U.S., the majority of undergraduates is over twenty-one years old, almost half are part-time, and one in three freshmen does not come directly from high school. (Lynton, 1986:29) Finding even one pure example of a "campus" type is exceedingly difficult; schools easily adopt various elements of what in North America would be termed extension or nontraditionality. Many students live at home and commute to campus, perhaps spending more study time at home than actually on campus. They likely have the option to earn at least part of their degree through assessment. A student might study part-time through the year, or only for special short terms. He might study at a satellite campus, or even at facilities rented for a short term. He might be responsible to his campus teachers but spend time away from campus in practicum or field research. He might use self-teaching materials and electronic communications while on campus, and he might use libraries and facilities from other institutions.

In the same way, correspondence education can adopt some elements of extension and campus education. A student might be encouraged to meet together with other students in classes, and his "self-teaching" materials might not work well unless he does so. Alternatively, he might be advised to link up with an accredited assessment school or be required to do part of the degree on campus.

In the end, to say that campus and extension delivery systems are intrinsically different is really an oversimplification; almost any single descriptor of extension education can be valid for campus education. It seems more accurate to say that delivery systems only tend to be different. Even geographical place of learning is not a clear descriptor; how big or permanent does a tutorial center or a satellite campus have to become before it is a small campus? Besides, simply being on campus hardly reflects the value of what is learned anyway. If "extension" delivery systems work at all, they can work just as well on "campus". The difference is one of degree, not of nature.

**Nontraditionality and Innovation**

The idea of nontraditionality is not quite correct and it needs to be reconsidered. A great deal of the nontraditional education literature deals with innovations and it is true that almost all new innovations need discussion to show how they work and why they are acceptable. Unfortunately, the ever-fashionable term "innovation" is often emotive and meaningless.

To say that a program is innovative can mean that a practice is outside the norms of schools in that country, even though it is conservative and well-established in other places. (PIAU, 1977:51) This might well be one of the most important meanings of the term because it fits most of the best innovations in higher education. A comparison of traditional styles of

European higher education yields many examples of programs which would appear very "innovative" in North America. Examples include bachelor degrees denoting readiness for original research, bachelor degrees by original research, higher degrees by research only, earned "honorary" higher doctorates, and access to Ph.D. programs without formal education but proven ability in research.

To say that a program is innovative can also mean any of the following:

1. It is interdisciplinary.
2. It uses self-study materials.
3. It is designed for practitioners.
4. It leads to an assessment degree.
5. It is available by part-time study.
6. It is available by correspondence.
7. It uses behaviorally-stated objectives.
8. It depends on electronic communications.
9. It adapts an existing model to a local situation.
10. It awards credit for evaluated non-school learning.
11. It is designed for people who would not otherwise study.[6]

In many cases, then, innovation is little more than adopting an alternative model, or manipulating or combining already well-established models, usually of delivery systems.

The term is also a marketing euphemism that hides the undesirable. An "innovative" program might also have one or more of the following characteristics:

1. Its purposes are unclear. (Usher, 1986:247)
2. It is unaccreditable. (The literature on degree mills gives many examples.)
3. It is experimental or unproven. (Bear, 1980:28)
4. Its delivery system is weak and inadequate.
5. It has too few resources to claim to be traditional.
6. It lays outside the scope of local accreditors who might be very conservative or uncooperative, or only accredit particular kinds of programs.
7. Its program directors are unwilling to seek formal recognition because they fear embarrassing evaluation results.
8. Its program directors incorrectly believe their program is too innovative to be accreditable. (Such a belief might have been true in the past.)

The term is more smoke than fire; it seldom refers to something new, such as the removal of academic prerequisites for admission to a degree program ("open access"). As innovations are seldom directly concerned with what students really learn, they are very peripheral to cognitive accreditation. Accreditors can evaluate the few cases of real innovations on a case-by-case basis.

**Nontraditional Study and Accreditation**

Despite necessarily vague definitions, nontraditional higher education is a good example for the study of accreditation. In particuar, TEE has not responded successfully to the issues of quality and accreditation despite being an identifiable movement with its own ethos and regional associations, and sincerely desiring good education. TEE students are like other part-time students in that they face pressures relating to lack of study time, use of resources, lack of

6 For the purposes of this study, all these "innovations" are considered valid.

long-term motivation and interaction, and sometimes lack of specialized study skills. (Smith, 1989:1-3) However, unlike mainstream distance education where key schools are all accredited, very little accreditation is available for TEE schools.

Admittedly, any definition of extension education is to some extent arbitrary. For accreditation purposes, it is not really different from campus study and an adequate accreditation model should encompass all types of delivery systems, even including correspondence. In fact, when schools blend both campus and extension types without distinction, it is impossible to accredit one type without the other. To say that it is identifiable only as a delivery system and that innovation is largely similar to non-innovation almost seems to destroy the subject. Such would only be true if extension education had seemed to need a separate accreditation system. However, the evidence supports a unified model of accreditation that can handle increasingly diverse kinds of education.

# 4
# FIVE MAJOR ASSUMPTIONS

The present study makes five major assumptions, each of which significantly affects the kind of conclusions possible. As mentioned above, Young has noted that accreditation is moving from quantitative to qualitative program evaluation. He also noted other major trends in accreditation as a whole. It is moving away from a requirement of institutional uniformity and allowing schools the freedom to be unique. It is depending less on external review and more on schools' internal self-evaluation and self-regulation. It is also moving from summative to formative evaluation. (1983a:9) These healthy trends make some of the assumptions discussed below.

**Cognitivism**

This study leans toward a cognitive conception of accreditation in that it centers upon the knowledge that students acquire. It is basically concerned with what happens in students' minds, seeking to define degrees as bodies of learning, and differentiating between types of knowledge. Although inherently rather intangible, cognitivism more accurately represents learning.

In one sense, this is not new. The nontraditional education movement, among others, has long assumed that education is learning, not just the externals of schooling. Various other fields of study have cognitive forms, such as psychology, learning theory, curriculum, and epistemology. An assumption of education as learning sharply contrasts with the ideas that higher education is primarily either a process of selection or an initiation rite into a cartel.

The cognitive assumption has other important ramifications. The physical place alone (on or off "campus") is quite irrelevent to accreditation. It is relevent that certain resources be available to students and in some places the campus is the place to put them. (*Cf.* Cross and Valley, 1974:1)

Cognitivism is also a partial response to the unfortunate modern trend to credentialism, in which degrees are more highly valued than the knowledge they supposedly represent. (Bruce, cited in Gasque and Gasque, 1990:2)

**Accreditation as Formative**

Browne reports assessments that have been simple questions of "good enough" or even "not good enough." (1984:49) Such thinking is adequate only for schools with obvious faults. It was good enough for Flexner, whose historic evaluation of America's medical schools forced many of them to close down. (Flexner, 1960:87; *cf.* Flexner, 1910:190) For the most part, however, an accreditor cannot justify a yes-no decision either to give or deny a school an accredited status. (Such a decision is included in the category called "summative.")

It is better to see evaluation results as formative, that is, useful for program improvement. Even the best schools continually need to be looking for ways to improve. This means that it is not enough simply to use different kinds of program evaluation to reach the same ends in accreditation, but that the ends themselves need to change.

Qualitative evaluation is not a justifiable basis for making summative decisions.[7] One of the reasons is that every program has potentially infinite aspects, each of which tends to be good or bad. The reality is shades of gray; no accreditation applicant is either perfect or without some redeeming features. Although some decisions to grant an accredited status are clear-cut, yes-no decisions have depended on the subjective personal judgments of some of the people involved.

Cronbach and Dressel also pointed out arguments in favor of a formative view of evaluation. In this regard, it is hard to underestimate the importance of Cronbach. Some of his most important contributions were to point out that programs are subject to a wide variety of interpersonal and political factors, and that programs continually evolve. It is true that not all his Ninety-five Theses attract universal approval and many of his ideas predated his 1981 book; nevertheless, his theses have contributed a great deal to creating a qualitative paradigm. There is little value in trying to pick fault with them, and much to be lost by ignoring them. They played a major role in separating qualitative from quantitative evaluation. (See Cronbach, 1980:2-11; also Guba and Lincoln, 1982:22)

Dressel also pointed out similar factors inclining an evaluation toward improvement. The more the evaluation is internal the less it carries the threat of rapid change; educational change is usually incremental anyway. Not only that, programs never stay the same; they are always in a state of change. (In this sense, an outside report based on a single short period of time can hardly be accurate.) Evaluators need to earn the trust of the people in the program and to keep track of its changes, watching truths about it continually float to the surface. Promoting improvement then becomes much easier. (Dressel, 1976:5, 7)

As the NUS has pointed out, quality is relative; it is not a definable point at which one can arrive. In fact, improving quality is much more important (and probably easier) than defining it. (1992:25f) It is rather easy to locate weaknesses and to encourage schools to improve, and self-studies function best in this role.

According to Ewell, some schools cannot use evaluation to improve their programs because they set up separate evaluation departments that are outside their decision-making structures; they see program review as reporting. He adds that it would be more appropriate for accreditors not just to ask schools to find weaknesses, but also to show that they have used evaluation results to improve. This also means that the information uncovered during evaluation must be useful for suggesting improvements. (1987:28; see also Premfors, 1986:172)

The emphasis on school improvement also brings up the problem that formative evaluation does not help in deciding on the accreditation status of schools (point fourteen in the above list of expectations). Although an accept-reject decision is too sharp to justify, it is pos-

7 This is not to say that qualitative evaluations are completely irrelevent to summative decisions. Stufflebeam claimed that the CIPP model (a qualitative model) could produce either formative or summative evaluation (1983:125), but it might be more accurate to say that his model could produce considerations that are useful in making summative decisions. Its data could only imply particular conclusions when it subsumed quantitative studies.

sible to de-emphasize it by providing various stages of accreditation to smooth the way from one status to another. Examples include unaccredited association member (for accreditors which are associations of schools), correspondent, candidate, accredited with notations or conditions (see below), accredited, and center of excellence. Besides, many accreditors accept schools with conditions, noting specific weaknesses which they must overcome by the time of the next evaluation. ATESEA (1984:20-23) gives most of its specific criteria in this form, calling them "notations." (Later chapters also discuss classification, which also helps minimize the problems of making summative decisions.)

**Uniqueness**

An important assumption in modern qualitative evaluation is that each school should have the freedom to be unique; schools need not be uniform. In practice, evaluators cannot presume that either that schools will be the same or that they will be different. Guba and Lincoln (1983:312ff; 1989) went so far as to suggest that each program has its own worldview.

Uniqueness has many strengths. Programs can never truly be uniform anyway, and evaluators who try to impose uniformity invite a different set of problems. Qualitative evaluation assumes that each school, being unique, has unique criteria by which it can be evaluated. How they are conceived varies according to evaluation model, but some include institutional and program goals, the expectations of people in the program, and the real goals functioning in the program.

Another advantage of uniqueness is that schools retain the right to determine their institutional goals, what type of program they will have, and how they will run it. That is, schools have an ethical right to their own autonomy.

Uniqueness also has some difficulties. If either accreditor or accreditee has a firm opinion on anything, they risk disagreement with the other party. Furthermore, some kinds of schools need to be somewhat uniform for professional licensing purposes. Similar types of schools in similar contexts with similar delivery systems might well share many similarities, while others might be very different.

A major consequence of uniqueness is that there is no one right way to run a school. TEE can and should come in a wide variety of types, each according to its own context, and more than one type of program might suit a particular context. Nevertheless, some ways can be said to be wrong or dysfunctional. (Rowntree, 1990:17)

**Responsibility**

Some modern accreditation approaches no longer presuppose that the school should be responsible to accreditors for its program because accreditors would control too many program specifics. Rather, the school must show the accreditor that it can be responsible to itself.

Consequently, accreditation now leaves much more to the schools' sense of academic responsibility than in the past. The CNAA in Britain has done more than other accreditors to transfer responsibility to its accreditees. (Brennan, 1986:153-155; Kogan, 1986:133; *HER*, 1987; *HER*, 1990)

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the CNAA development was its three phases. Until the mid 1970s, it was prescriptive and depended on teachers from established universities. It then changed by making the schools "partners" in the process, more responsible for self-evaluation. From 1986, schools became fully responsible for themselves by recruiting peer review teams who would conduct the evaluation. Several factors seem to have contributed to

such a success. Both accreditor and accreditee were government-owned, and most of those schools were of the same "generation." Besides, CNAA accreditees had to compare themselves to the long-established autonomous universities with proven ability in maintaining standards; sharing the system of external examiners gave them a clear standard of comparison. The procedure was also helpful; in the early stages, the CNAA enforced very high standards, and peer review teams had to have at least two members from outside the school under review. (Harris, 1990, esp. pp. 35f)

The school, not the accreditation agency, should evaluate how well the school has adapted to its context, because it should be free to determine its own internal standards and to develop its own identity and program objectives. Consequently, general criteria become less important, only applying to things that are common to all schools, while the self-study becomes more important. Lines of accountability end within the school and should show that it can take responsibility for maintaining its own standards.

**Functional Units**

Another essential feature of evaluating higher education is the idea of functional (or basic) units. Becher and Kogan defined them as the smallest units which have a "corporate life" of their own. (1980:79) Compared to evaluating a large institution in one study, it is far easier to divide it into smaller units called functional units. A unit may be one department (*e.g.*, the Department of Linguistics), or a small faculty (*e.g.*, the Faculty of Economics), or a branch school. (*Cf.* Premfors, 1986:170) In a large school, the central admininstration is a separate functional unit. A small school might be a single unit, and the following discussion assumes that this is the case to simplify discussion. Each unit needs to be clearly definable and to function as a unit with its own program and administration. Browne (1984:48) even points out that large universities can be very weak at departmental level, and too complex for management to do much about them.

Some schools successfully have the same program in both campus and extension without differentiating the two aspects. In other cases, schools separate their campus program from their extension department. They might differ in degrees offered, academic levels, subjects offered, and target populations. They might have separate staff and academic standards, and minimal administrative ties to each other. In this case, accreditors justifiably deem the extension department to be a separate functional unit. It is almost a separate school; indeed, any transfer of students and credit between them is much the same as between schools.

By keeping the evaluation small, evaluators can deal directly with stakeholders. This minimizes the role of organized lobby groups which, despite their protestations, can seldom if ever guarantee that they truly represent the whole of a stakeholder population. As organizations with policy platforms and internal political pressures, they easily eccentrize and politicize the evaluation.

# 5
# THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE

The nature of knowledge plays a more important role in accreditation than it would first appear; it holds a great deal of sway over what students might learn and how it might be accredited.

**A Unified Epistemological Field**

The first issue is epistemological fields. An epistemological field is a set of presuppositions which make up a worldview in which everything should be consistent. From the viewpoint of a given field, an alternative field is at best an irrelevancy and at worst a distorted model of reality.

It is attractive to think of traditional and nontraditional styles of education as alternative fields, although it would misrepresent the way they blend and overlap. In fact, the two styles are simply different parts of the same field. Unfortunately it is too expansive to conceive easily, and arguments between different styles are really only battles for territory. For example, traditional education has emphasized lectures as a means of teaching, while much nontraditional education uses self-instructional material with performance objectives. These are really only alternative delivery systems.

Guba and Lincoln go so far as to see each school as a separate field. In their avoidance of positivism, they suggest that the community of each school is entitled to its own unique, emergent worldview. As a result, they see the negotiated consensus of the community as the proper basis for program evaluation. (1982, 1989) However, it is difficult to justify separate fields by appealing to factors which make schools unique, such as specific goals, analysis and justification of student needs, and group culture. While one might well concur with their rejection of positivism, positivism is not the only possible hard epistemology.

**Hard and Soft Epistemologies**

The next issue is that epistemology falls roughly into two categories, which might be called "hard" and "soft." Historically, the problem is a variation of the ancient philosophical tension between the one and the many.

In a "hard" epistemology, knowledge comprises a finite number of discrete units, which are impersonal, objective, and statically interrelated. Knowledge can always be wholly manifested in language. As it deals with specific, identifiable particulars, it does not claim to represent the whole of reality. Educational programs are rationally formulated, and, in its favor, this view encourages rational discussion. Unfortunately, it easily leads to extreme views such as beliefs that a linguistic representation is the same as its referent and that education and learning can be reduced to numbers and statistics.

In a "soft" epistemology, knowledge is an infinite number of nondiscrete units. Knowledge is intersubjective; it has a personal and subjective aspect; it greatly depends on the ability of people to find and examine relevant issues in a problem and to come to agreement. Relationships between units are dynamic. The content of knowledge can potentially be described in infinitely many ways, none of which should be overidentified with the referent. As a soft epistemology is not necessarily tied solely to particulars, it can claim to represent the whole of reality. Programs are formulated by negotiation between people. This view also leads to extreme beliefs such as the idea that linguistic representation is so different from its referent that it can no longer really represent it. Consequently, extremists sometimes hold that truth is ineffable.

In fact, both hard and soft views are important to accreditation, indeed, to education in general. For example, programs are negotiated but they should not be irrational. Language can refer adequately, but not exhaustively, to its referents although articulating knowledge accurately is not always easy. Reality consists of wholes, but language can truly refer to any particular among the wholes.

Consequently, it is better to make a bipartite model than to create an inflexible compromise. The real lesson is often to avoid the extremes, which lead to inaccuracies and irrationality. These themes occur many times and in many variations throughout this study, including concept of quality, type of curriculum, educational objectives and accreditation models.

**Simple and Complex Knowledge**

Picking up the themes of "hard"and "soft", knowledge can be represented as either simple or complex. This somewhat overdichotomizes the extremes of each position, but it crystallizes the issue and both extremes really exist. Behaviorist education needs to solve the problem of the simplified type of knowledge it advocates, while discipline-based academia needs to make its information simple enough to make it easier to communicate.

Simple knowledge refers to the way that teachers artificially divide knowledge into pieces for didactic purposes. Each piece is a well-defined separate idea, often small, and normally expressed in its own behavioral objective which the student can master separately from other information. Students either do not need to learn component concepts in order to conceptualize it, or learn component concepts as small, discrete units.

A sharp line divides what is taught from what is not. The teacher arranges the pieces into only one rigid structure based mainly on didactic considerations. He provides all information and instructions necessary to reach his objectives but seldom provides much other literature, and especially avoids original resource materials so that students do not get lost in a maze of confusing information. His examples require students to make differentiations between examples which have only one contrasting characteristic. By limiting information to the totally known, he can predetermine all correct responses and examination answers, making evaluation very objective.

Of course, he has the best of intentions. He knows that students will master most of the material but that he cannot teach very much; consequently he only teaches basic information thoroughly. Its rigidity does not encourage the type of thinking skills as would complex information. There is little doubt that this type of information is very suitable for people without the ability to dig into a large mine of complex information. It also suits people higher on the academic ladder when sophisticated information is expressible in a "simple" form and when

students need to master it. Markle (1969) is a good example of very sophisticated knowledge taught through programmed instruction; being aimed primarily at Master's level students.

Complex knowledge is rather the opposite; it is very soft. This is usually the raw material of the area of study (be it discipline, subdiscipline, or interdisciplinary field) in its natural form with its own distinct methods, assumptions, historical background, and body of literature. Complex knowledge follows the shape of the literature (standard texts, famous monographs, theses and journals), and the student who wants to survive needs to understand it and handle it skillfully.

Another form is the kind of information available from field studies (surveys and interviews), and another is bodies of professional experience and expertise. At least in Western countries, these other two forms soon get written down and take their place in the literature as separate kinds of writings.

In whichever form, the student never learns the whole of any one subject, the core of which is difficult to identify and define (or more accurately, subject to many competing definitions). It has a large periphery to which students get exposure but seldom need to master.

Concepts are larger, fewer, and more dynamic than in simple knowledge. They are defined, but each is a flux of interrelated variables, consisting of many elements and usually closely related to other concepts. Examples are seldom simple black-white differentiations. Phenomena can be justified by several competing theories or models, which the student must evaluate to defend his choice of the most appropriate. Being familiar with different models of reality, he can interpret new phenomena as fitting into different structures and hierarchies, each of which he can evaluate according to disciplinary methodology. Consequently, he is often free to structure his knowledge in any way he can justify.

Students learn to locate and utilize unrelated information in parallel fields by noticing implications and analogies, drawing inferences, developing alternative applications, and synthesizing it into very different forms. Pit Corder suggests that this is one of the main ways of using theoretical knowledge for practical purposes. (1973:143)

Students have the opportunity to travel to the frontiers of disciplinary knowledge and try some original research. As both students and teachers can be creative, students can emphasize understanding, analysis, synthesis and evaluative-critical thought. Consequently, very few examination answers can be predetermined, and evaluation rests largely on expertise and subjective judgement. Like behavior and knowledge, learning and end product are inextricably combined.

**The Choice Between Simple and Complex**

Which is better—the processed product or the raw material? Each most clearly has strengths and weaknesses. From a strictly pedagogical point of view, the former is largely superior. Everything is unambiguous and easy to understand, and sequenced steps make learning easier. Key ideas are crystallized in explanations, examples, and exercises which have proven their clarity in field-tests. As this approach does not necessarily imply that ideas are oversimplified, it can teach extremely difficult information very efficiently.

It can, however, tend to indoctrinate students because it predetermines what students will learn, and no author has perfectly balanced opinions. It does not favor research or analytical and critical-evaluative thought. In extreme forms, it fails to equip students with the kind of knowledge they need to teach others because students who become teachers need complex

knowledge from which to derive simple knowledge. The information they learn does not closely resemble the original raw material of the discipline; it is like manufactured food pre-processed in bite-size portions. Besides, it too often lacks the strengths of complex knowledge.

Complex knowledge has its weaknesses. It is easily identified with the idea that disciplinary knowledge is a secret science for the elite. Students do not necessarily master the core information in their field of study; in fact they can bypass the intent of examiners by repeating rote-learned information. Complex knowledge defined in disciplinary terms favors almost exclusively the academic and cognitive models of curriculum; there is no clear distinction between the type of knowledge and its corresponding curriculum model.

However, it reflects more closely the heart of academia and it is no wonder that many academics prefer it. Indeed, it is academically far more honest because it reflects the subtleties and vagaries of real science. Students also spend more time on the frontier, perhaps even doing some exploring on their own, although it is not a good place for beginners. Students learn the assumptions and methodologies of their discipline and develop far more mature thinking skills.

Both have strengths and weaknesses, and some subjects can be equally well taught as either type of knowledge. In fact they overlap in some ways; flow charts and algorithms are ways of converting complex knowledge into simple knowledge. An educational program ideally takes advantage of both, a matter taken up in terms of content and functionality.

**Content and Functionality**

Another variation of the hard-soft theme relates particularly to defining educational quality. The content-functionality dichotomy forms a theme running through the program evaluation literature. It primarily affects the philosophy of quality and is perhaps best seen as presuppositional to the present study.

Content, emphasized in the British literature, is the information, thinking skills, applied skills, and attitudes which students should learn. A content-based description of a curriculum describes what sort of things students should learn and what topics it should cover, but it avoids crystallizing content into a list of narrow, rigid objectives.

Freedman points out that many students' problem is simply that they lack information. (1987:69) CNAA has greatly emphasized content, but does not appear to have given equal emphasis to functionality. (*Cf. e.g.*, Brennan, 1986:152ff)

Content emphasis has a number of concomitants. It characteristically sees learning as an end in its own right with its goals internal to the education system; they include, for example, institutional statements of mission, the goals of higher education generally, academic research, and disciplinary goals. As a result, academics can feel that ultimately all accountability should be to academics. This view is primarily ontological as it refers to the existence of knowledge, and conceives of the discipline as a whole rather than as the sum of its parts. It is epistemologically soft because it focuses on the content itself as a community of people see it. Consequently, it favors a consensus view of quality, and academic and cognitive curriculum models.

It favors program evaluation by a panel of subject matter experts who check that students have mastered their field of study but are less concerned with helpings students to assimilate their lessons. Students must take more initiative in their reading and in learning their discipline's "rules of play."

By nature, it does little to protect the interests of students against dysfunctionality.

In contrast, the American literature gives more prominence to functionality, that is, harmony between program elements. It has two forms, both of which use internal consistency as their central criterion. In the first form, functionality refers to the extent that all parties agree to the program and implies an epistemologically softer value, that of negotiation and consensus. By including students, it checks whether they can cope with the amount they are expected to learn and the way in which it is taught, and leans toward a stakeholder view of program evaluation.

The second form of functionality is teleological; education becomes a means of reaching particular ends. Fitness for purpose is an overriding criterion, and the ends, whether academic or not, become a way to evaluate knowledge and to provide rationale and programmatic coherence. To do this, it is usual to articulate specific objectives.

For example, managerialism is really an issue of functionality. In this sense, managerialism is the idea that academics should be accountable for demonstrating to society and government that they are achieving ends useful to the whole society. Managers in educational leadership can impose managerial values on education, in contrast to the disciplinary interests of the academics themselves. Managerialists more readily see the goals of education as external to education, expressing them in terms of service to separate interest groups such as industry, government, the community, or the church, who ultimately control education. Barnett (1988a) basically fears that managers will impose a set of purposes on universities that are contrary to those of the academic community. He even goes so far as to question means-ends thinking in separating fitness from purpose. (See also Kogan, 1986:125f)

In teleological functionality, organizational efficiency becomes important. Functional teachers are concerned about instructional effectiveness and communication skills. They write objectives and see that students achieve them, leaning towards a means-ends view of quality and program evaluation, and to both means-ends and problem-solving views of curriculum. In extreme forms, a discipline is conceived as many particulars, each of which is expressible in propositional terms (especially as objectives), the sum of which is the whole.

Dysfunctionality is disharmony between program elements. This can take a remarkably wide variety of forms, for example:

1. Learning goals that do not fit the student population,
2. Degree definitions that do not fit employment,
3. Unwieldy or ineffective administrative services ("red tape"),
4. Unfair practices by staff or administration,
5. Excessive and unrealistic demands upon students, in terms reading loads, class-hour loads, or years to complete the program,
6. Timetable conflicts,
7. Subject matter experts who cannot communicate with students, and,
8. Program rationale might conflict with what actually happens.

Educational literature often emphasizes functionality. This is almost a tautology, because education and functionality are both largely preoccupied with communication. Kinsler uses a content-communication dichotomy to discuss the issue of content and functionality, saying that the content-based program depends on its content for motivation, and has unclear objectives and poor instructional technology. It validates programs based on tradition and gives symbolic rewards. The option, he contends, is to find motivation within the learner, have clear

objectives and good instructional technology, and offer pragmatic rewards. He adds that academia has traditionally been strong on content but weak on functionality. (1981:48f)

Harrison echoes the complaint in slightly different form, complaining that programs can be top-heavy on cognitive content but weak in applied and attitudinal training. (N.d.:12) Pomerville suggests that excessive orientation to content is not in students' best interests because it does not focus on what kind of people students will become or what they will be able to do. (1973:57) Harrison's and Pomerville's opinions reveal underlying views on tensions between curriculum models, identifying some models with content and others with functionality.

Dressel brings up the issue when discussing educational objectives. If a program has neither objectives nor concern for utility, it focuses only on content as both its means and its ends. On the other hand, too many objectives draw attention away from content. Dressel concludes that a small number of clear objectives is better for both teacher and learner. Kells (1986:146) also mentions Campbell's (1977) suggestion of a model based on outcome testing and analysis of function.

Both content and functionality have an important role to play in accreditation. Content-based evaluation compares what it is that students learn with expert knowledge of the field of study, something that pure functionality cannot do. Consequently, content lends itself to a softer epistemology; it sees knowledge as softer, being more complex and less easy to reduce to objectives. Schools can improve by making culture-dependent programs more indigenous, by planning and administrating them better, and providing better materials.

Schools can be strong in one and weak in the other. Well-organized schools can be highly functional but low on content, imparting relatively little of it to their students. Similarly, prestigious schools can become quite dysfunctional even when they remain strong on content. Barnett mentions the common problem of schools overloading students with information and instigating repressive assessment regimes. (1988a:105) Their lack of functionality is a major argument against giving them full autonomy for maintaining their own standards.

Neither content nor functionality is easy to define operationally and a perfect balance is elusive. In fact, they are not completely separable; Tyler used content to derive objectives for a means-ends system (1949:25ff) and consensus groups make decisions on content. The simple solution is to accept that both are indispensable; a significant lack of either is a major educational disaster. Ideally, schools will have high levels of both content and functionality because students need to master their fields of study and schools need to be well-run.

**Standards and Systems**

In a similar way, content and functionality parallel another dichotomy. Content is like educational standards, and functionality is like school systems, such as the type of school and its delivery and evaluation systems. In this sense, standards and systems are best kept sharply differentiated, and it is more accurate to evaluate each on their own merits.

It is all too easy to presume that traditional education has high standards and nontraditional education has low standards, simply because their systems appear very different. It is also true that "traditional" delivery systems can have very low standards, and that some procedures are inherently wrong. That is, traditional systems alone do not guarantee high standards, and non-traditional systems can still maintain high standards. For example, it is valid in principle to give degrees solely on the basis of assessment, but an assessment degree program needs high standards to maintain credibility. One of the lessons of London University is that the public accepts a radically nontraditional program if its standards are very high. Some degree

mills use the same delivery system as some major universities (for example, they might both be extension research institutes) but the standards and procedures are very different.

A view of accreditation, then, needs to account for both issues of content and functionality, and differentiate between standards and systems. The next chapter turns from presuppositions of quality and evaluation, and deals with institutionality.

# 6
# INSTITUTIONALITY

An applicant for accreditation needs to be able to show that it is a responsible school and that it will not soon cease operations. Criteria for institutionality have become fairly standardized; for example, accreditors require schools to have a board of governors, to maintain a permanent address, to be financially solvent and responsible, and to legally registered with the government. This chapter sets out to identify "schoolness" in general and look especially at it role in nontraditional education using TEE as a particular example.

**Characteristics of Schools**

Even defining the concept of "school" in formal education is a little arbitrary; as mentioned above, the distinction between accreditor and school is a little vague.

Houle mentions five formal procedures which can identify a school: enforcing admissions requirements, providing instruction, assessing student performance, awarding formal credentials, and giving professional licensing.

Nevertheless, all of these can be delegated to other institutions outside the school. Other organizations can provide student selection services, and some open access schools have successfully done away with them altogether. Teaching is not always necessary; assessment schools evaluate learning obtained elsewhere. In other cases, teaching and assessment are organizationally separate; the university can hold examinations and teaching can be delegated to the university's colleges.

Evaluation can be contracted out to specialist organizations in educational testing. The accreditor might award the degree. Many professional organizations have their own registration procedures, so that a degree alone is inadequate as a professional license. (Houle, 1973:19-44)

It is better to say what a school is in relation to accreditation. That is, a school may delegate some of its procedures, but it must ultimately take responsibility for them. For accreditation purposes, it is the legally constituted body which authorizes the issue of diplomas as formal qualifications. It has a board of governors which takes responsibility for the school's activities through given lines of authority and accountability. Being a school implies a measure of permanence, with continuing responsibilities to its graduates.

Schools intend that students develop some kind of knowledge base commensurate with a formal qualification. It is often academic in some way, except in some strictly vocational schools. In any case, it has standards of acceptable performance and a means by which it can be accountable for the evaluation of its students.

**Schools and Non-schools**

Perhaps the first differentiation to make is whether or not a program is a school, that is, whether it is formal or non-formal education. If a program is not a school, then it cannot become accredited, and for accreditation purposes, it almost ends there. Schools are very different from non-formal training programs. One aims for some type of knowledge base commensurate with a formal qualification while the other simply aims for the ability to do the job. Students in formal study need to see this difference themselves; a student who does not see his study as contributing to a degree need not feel irresponsible if he drops out.

This differentiation does not help distinguish between extension and campus education. It is wrong to assume that extension education can only focus on non-formal training while campus programs focus on schooling, for extension can be formal schooling and campuses can hold training programs. In fact, an extension school has far more in common with a campus school than with a non-formal extension training program, because schools share certain common characteristics.

The differentiation is not absolute. A few kinds of non-school training programs do not wish to be seen as schools, but they are so accountable that they are schools in all but name. As sources of transfer credit, no further evaluation of their students or credit is necessary (*cf.* USNY, 1986; Valley, 1972:117). Even without accreditation or "schoolness", their graduates can translate their learning into transferable credit through formal assessment.

Similarly, some institutions would not readily agree to being classified as schools. For example, some government departments and professional societies act as examining boards, and some government departments supervise separate teaching institutions and issue degrees for them. A major accreditor, the CNAA in Britain, awards degrees, a function normally reserved for schools.

Some programs cannot become legally incorporated for local reasons, but they intend to be schools and have all other characteristics of schools. Some become autonomous departments within sponsoring institutions, such as a denominations; others give diplomas which are academically equivalent to degrees. The ATA accreditation guide allows for such situations and implies that it could give accreditation (1987:28).

**Choosing between Formal and Non-formal Education**

Many nontraditional programs would be better off being training programs and not claiming to be schools. For example, Patterson's TEE program in Honduras is not in any sense a school and is clearly not accreditable. Without being academic in any way, it focusses entirely on ongoing practical training and seems to have very effectively produced competent people. (Patterson, 1980)

An excellent training program is less glamorous and perhaps less instant, but it is a better choice in some circumstances. It might be less expensive, and it could avoid many problems, especially by reducing administrative load and avoiding the formation of a new legal entity. By having no academic aims and issuing no degrees, it need not be concerned with academic standards, internal academic accountability, or qualifications of teaching staff. The program is successful if its constituency is satisfied with what students are learning. Even if it closes down, it is not as bad as a school which closes down, because it has promised less and has fewer responsibilities to its graduates and its constituency.

Students might be unable to commit themselves to a regular, long-term schedule. There might be no intention of establishing a permanent institution, or no need of formal recogni-

tion. In some cases, teaching might be an update on previous learning rather than an addition to it. Non-formal and continuing education now have a separate body of literature.

An implication of the difference between schools and non-schools is that very weak applicants to a school need to be excluded from for-credit study, no matter how sincerely they desire to learn. If they cannot meet the learning goals of their program, then they might come and listen, but they cannot continue as students. In contrast, they might be far better suited to some kinds of training programs.

The TEE movement has shown signs that it might divide into a schooling camp and a non-schooling camp. This would be of great detriment to the movement because each kind of education has a valuable but separate role, and "non-schooling" might really be "anti-schooling."

Frame (1984) has suggested dumping the "academic model" with its emphasis on degrees, accreditation, etc. in favor of a learning community, the members of which minister to each other an develop their ministry in the outside world (*e.g.*, pp. 379f). At least as Ferris presents Frame's view, several issues are more appropriately discussed under later headings. One is the issue of the type of school and another is the model of curriculum. Frame seems to prefer a non-school, but his intentions could just as easily be manifested in a school that functioned as a community of scholars and used humanistic and means-ends curriculum models.

For much the same reasons, Ward and McKinney hold that evaluation, grades, credits, and degrees are incompatible with the task of theological education. McKinney even goes so far as to say that the very nature of TEE is incompatible with schooling (p. 38), because she sees TEE as contextual, experimental, developmental, and church-based, while also emphasizing servant leadership. (McKinney, n.d.:29f)

At the risk of overgeneralization, Ward and McKinney are probably correct in implying that most schools adhere the practices of evaluation, grades, credits and degrees. By predefining TEE according to particular curriculum models, however, they have not argued against schooling; they have simply over-identified schooling with particular models of curriculum. First of all, they need not have identified evaluation with schooling; students in non-formal programs also need evaluation. Besides, the question of schooling begs the question of the task of theological education; if it is no more than training, then non-formal programs are better than schools. On the other hand, a school is more appropriate for students who need formal recognition and a structured knowledge base.

Apparently more to the point is that these practices easily tend to imply attitudes such as these:

1. People with degrees are more capable than those without them.
2. Students should compete and some of them should be losers.
3. People with low grades are somehow inferior to people with high grades.
4. Students with many credits know more than those with few credits.
5. Students cease studying when they graduate.
6. Competence is more important than the "trappings" of education.

Excepting degrees, schools can avoid these attitudes if they wish; they are not necessarily part of formal education. In fact, they tend to reflect only the instructional institution model of school discussed below.

A degree signifies that its holder has learnt something, that he has been evaluated and certified as having met program requirements. This need not imply that non-students have not learned the same things, even though schools earnestly intend that people will learn more by taking a degree program than by staying away. In the same way, schools hope that more credits mean more knowledge. Perhaps more of a problem is that degree-holders sometimes feel that they are an elite class, and Ward's implied criticism is echoed in the "servant leadership" literature.

On the point of competition, formal education can avoid competition by using individualized education, assessment schools, and pass-fail evaluation (including criterion referencing). As for differing grades, the fault, if there is one, lays in the paramessage which demeans weaker students. Then again, nobody doubts that students vary greatly in ability, maturity, and motivation, and even non-formal education has weaker students.

That study stops when a person graduates is too often true. The issue is more complex than it appears because older people learn quite differently (the present term is "androgenous learning"), and long-term, part-time study sometimes approximates lifelong learning. Besides, an increasing number of schools discourage students from ceasing study on graduation; many now provide continuing education or professional graduate degrees. Perhaps almost all prefer to think that students develop learning skills which will be useful after graduation; part of the meaning of many degrees is that graduates are equipped to do lifelong study at that academic level.

**Types of schools**

Schools come in different types, which influence how they are run, what sort of degrees they will give, and the role of staff and students. Actually these are models; in reality, they tend to overlap and seldom occur in pure form. The list of possibilities is not limited to those below:

*Instructional institutions*. Most schools conceive of education as a commodity or a service for sale, as is most easily seen in their advertising to recruit new students. Students are paying consumers; they apply to the school, pay the required fees, attend classes where somebody teaches them, sit the examinations, and get a diploma when they finish. The students presumably are not experts and the teachers presumably are, so the two groupings are distinct. The staff are a well-defined class of people who get paid for their services and have rights to determine what students must do to graduate. These schools have a bureaucratic administration, and tend to be managerialist. If the staff closely control and tightly structure the learning experience, higher education can become no more than more high school. For the vast majority of students, however, it is also the most useful concept of a school simply because they need someone to teach them.

Even among many nontraditional educators, this is the most common concept of a school; in fact, some people have trouble conceiving of a school in any other way. Accreditors seem to tend to presume that their accreditees could only be instructional institutions.

*Scholarly communities*. Some schools function mainly as fellowships of scholars, whose main task is to engage in scholarly discussion and research. Especially among the older universities in the West, degrees are essentially ranks or statuses within the community, and education and teaching are simply the means by which someone learns enough to become a peer with the other scholars. This style also has long been found in professional guilds, and is still

found in some professional organizations. It implies a democratic administrative system and tends to reject managerialist values.

*Research institutes*. Some schools exist mainly to produce publishable research. They require only research for particular higher degrees, and the degree is simply a recognition of a major piece of research. There need be no classes as long as students stay in contact with their supervisors, and institutions tend to specialize in fields where they have most expertise, as a good pool of expertise is essential to the school's success. Compared to course work, this kind of program suits fewer students because it so heavily emphasizes independent study with minimal guidance.

*Assessment schools*. A number of schools do not teach; they assess learning obtained elsewhere through formal, non-formal, or informal education and grant credits and degrees on the basis of assessment results. In schools which exist mainly to accept transfer credit, the school assesses the transfer credit, not the student.

This type of program especially suits countries where permits to grant degrees are very difficult to get. Small teaching schools can group together to form a central school, which does not teach but provides assessment degrees for its members, which act as its representatives. In some cases, it can be correct to say that the member schools are accreditees of the central school.

Some assessment programs draw upon the British university tradition, hardly differing from some teaching institutions in the way they depend heavily on formal, written examinations. They assume that the degree is basically a measure of cognitive, academic knowledge, so it is hardly possible that students could learn enough through life experience to pass the assessment.

Some nontraditional schools, however, use behavioral objectives to assess technical and technological knowledge learned apart from formal study. Degrees with practitioner majors can also be examined in part through practicum and through non-research writing projects, but assessment schools have not yet made full use of them despite their widespread use in taught programs. Perhaps the majority of schools assess on a course work basis, but sometimes it is equally valid to provide summative examinations for an entire degree program if they major on a field of expertise.

*Practicum programs.* On-the-job training is called "apprenticeship" in vocational education, where it can easily comprise a program's entire delivery system. It is called "internship" or "practicum" in higher education, where degrees with practicum always also include formal study. In either case, the stuent must master certain applied skills under the supervision of an expert and then be evaluated.

Nontraditional education has explored the possibilities of the assessment school rather extensively in the last twenty years. Unfortunately, however, it has not examined the innovation potential of the scholarly community, the research institute, and the practicum program.

**Institutionality Criteria**

Criteria for schoolness require all schools to be uniform in some way. As modern accreditation encourages programs to be diverse, the question is, "What must be uniform?"

Even a small school is quite complicated. It requires an institutional mission, program objectives, distinctives, and a constitution. It needs capital, a supportive constituency and fi-

nancial base, administrative procedures, and accurate records. It needs to gives degrees, statuses, or credit transcripts and therefore needs a stable description of their requirements. Any school needs people: administrators, members for its board of governors, qualified staff, and secretarial help, all of whom need job descriptions. Very few schools can survive without students and a student recruitment strategy.

The methodology of accrediting institutionality belongs to a later chapter and it is enough here to emphasize internal accountability. While by no means the only issue involved, it is essential to being a school. This is quite different from the use of the term "accountability" in the present literature, where it usually means the way in which government schools are accountable to government to provide value for money. In contrast, "internal accountability" refers to the way in which the board of governors take responsibility for all the activities of its school, and implies an administrative structure.

It has many consequences. An accreditable school needs to show that it has a board of governors taking responsibility, that it is not an autocracy. It needs to be able to show to its funders that it is honest and responsible with money. Students, graduates, and staff want to know that their school will not close down in the foreseeable future. Evaluators need especial accountability for examinations and results so that the school has a basis for giving credits and degrees.

The ATS considered accountability to be a central factor in maintaining quality, and its schools could not extend its accreditation to off-campus programs away from full accountability to the central insititution. (1986:119)

Accountability can be the main dissimilarity between a good school and a degree mill. For example, it is the main difference between University of London's graduate research degree program and that of the now-defunct New Jersey degree mill, Marlowe University, to which students posted checks and theses. (Hefferlin, 1974:151)

Teachers (for those schools that have them) are responsible to their administrators for upholding the school's standards. They can do this by keeping records of what students are supposed to learn in the form of such things as subject descriptions, thesis proposals or theses, practicum contracts, and self-teaching texts.

Among schools which have both academic and training aims, it is easy to give an irresponsible over-emphasis to the training element. It is tempting to allow experienced practitioners to teach academic subjects for which they are academically unsuited, or to give passing grades to failing students if they are sincere and show promise as practitioners. (To be fair, there is the opposite problem of allowing over-emphasis on academic studies at the expense of practitioner training.)

The more education becomes "nontraditional" and the wider it extends geographically, the better its accountability systems need to be. By having less control over the teaching-learning process, schools are less able to monitor informally students' progress in the classroom. For example, the kind of student-teacher communication might mean that the school knows little about the student's response to the teaching-learning process. In other cases, the school which delegates its functions needs to be sure that it can still be responsible for them. Some schools need be more sure of their student assessment because they depend on it so heavily. Extension teachers can easily compromise the program by giving unwarranted exemptions and dispensations. Distance makes practicum harder to supervise adequately, especially for

part-time students with domestic responsibilities who must find study time outside employment hours.

**TEE's Problem of Institutional Instability**

TEE schools provide some important warnings for nontraditional education. In its early days, the TEE movement greatly exaggerated what it could do; openminded people were tempted by the idea that they could instantly found a good, well-run school very cheaply by buying special books, choosing a name, and hanging up a sign outside. The idea of teaching many potential students over a very wide area was extremely attractive, especially as it supposedly required few full-time staff, little expertise, and minimal formal qualifications. The thought of great numbers of competent trainees and graduates was hard to resist. Before long, however, many schools were deluged with problems which they did not fully understand. It is not only interesting that Kornfield and Mulholland could identify schools in the TEE movement so distinctly, but also that they could generalize so broadly on their weaknesses without much fear of contradiction:

1. The teacher lacks time with his family because he does so much travelling.
2. Students lack exposure to a variety of teachers.
3. Travelling can be very costly.
4. Teachers have difficulty evaluating student ministry firsthand.
5. Teachers might only emphasize cognitive knowledge because they lack time with students.
6. The program lacks written and human resources between the teacher's visits. (Kornfield, 1976:24)
7. TEE depends too much on expatriate leadership.
8. TEE programs are often institutionally unstable. (Mulholland, n.d.:19-23; Harrison, n.d.:6f; Ward, 1977)

Accreditors are in a good position to require that extension schools adequately solve these problems which destabilize them and reduce their administrative effectiveness.

For many schools, extending beyond their resources has been a threat to institutional stability. They have mistakenly assumed that they can reach great numbers of students over a very wide geographical area because teachers need not spend long with their classes. Staff are tempted by a distant class with good students, and rationalize that this is the meaning of extension.

It is easy and dangerous to overstretch resources in teachers, time, and communications. In fact TEE can only reach a large area when communications are exceptionally efficient and reliable, or when regional branches do most of the routine administration and decision-making. In geographically widespread programs, communication can be difficult. Paperwork is problematical. Staff who find it difficult to confer with other staff have less influence in decision-making processes.

Harrison likened the problem of institutionally unstable TEE to fireworks—a great deal of exiting noise and color followed by a rapid fizzle into oblivion. It easily becomes a spectacular failure. Ward thought that some kinds of TEE programs were sincere but poorly planned and overambitious, promising much and delivering little. (Harrison, n.d.:6f; Ward, 1977)

Overextension causes many of the problems mentioned earlier: excessive funds and staff time committed to travel, lack of time with students, lack of resources between teachers' visits, and institutional instability. It also contributes to overdependence on expatriates by requiring more from its staff.

Funding is also a problem. Both the TEE and the nontraditional education movements claimed that their programs cost very little and can easily become self-supporting. However, Keegan and Rumble concluded that distance teaching universities are not always less expensive than campus education, although the cost structures are complex and very different. (*e.g.*, Keegan and Rumble, 1982b: 242f; Harrison, n.d.:7; Markowitz, 1987; see also Rumble, 1987)

It is easy to underestimate the true costs of a school which depends heavily of extension principles. They include administration and transport costs, equipment, salaries, the value of office and classroom space, and the production and distribution of materials. Long-term programs produce graduates very slowly without necessarily compensating in terms of short-term benefit. On a cost-benefit basis, a given group of students can also be very expensive if a few drop out or if some are marginal.

Heavy dependence on expatriates and their funds exacerbates the problem. It is not enough to ask whether a school is presently self-supporting, but whether it would be fully self-supporting at the same level without expatriate help. The Asia Theological Association have seen this difficulty and require that the budget include expatriate salaries, and that each school must show that it has improved in developing local support rather than being overly dependent on foreign funds. (1985:10, 11; *cf.* also ATESEA, 1984:22)

In practice, solid funding is essential; present accreditation criteria for off-campus education are unanimous. For example, the American Association of Bible Colleges says that extension programs require more resources than is normal for a [campus] Bible college, mentioning specifically financial support and faculty. "Extension programs should not ... create stress with respect to financial stability." (1976:66) The California State Department of Education requires that income exceed costs and that there is cash on hand. (CSDE, 1982:13) The NAPNSC holds that schools should have an accurate budget and a positive financial balance after all expenses (1982:131-133). The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada wisely say that starting an extension school requires "sufficient additional financial resources", adding that a school cannot justify starting a new extension program only on the basis that it will probably be financially self-supporting. (1984:61) The message is clear--a school that wants accreditation needs a sound financial footing.

The above authors mention how TEE schools too often tended to make excessive demands on staff. Earlier advocates of TEE underestimated the need for full-time staff. It is true that some need very few full-time staff and can survive and even flourish by relying on part-time teachers. In theory, an accreditable school could have only part-time staff, but more likely it needs some full-time people to ensure that all management, teaching and secretarial functions are responsibly carried out.

Teachers easily become overloaded in time spent travelling and in the number of classes they can take. Traditional criteria limiting the number of semester hours do not help because there can be too many variables to determine easily how much time they can spend in class each week. (See *e.g.*, ATA, 1985:17) These factors include the number of subjects allotted to a teacher, how many of them he has taught before, the kind and amount of preparation, the academic level of the subject taught, his amount of experience and ability, and whether or not he is writing or still studying. Other variables are the amount of time spent in class, supervising practicum, talking with students, travelling, and administrating. He might have limits on how much can be away from home, or he might be consulting or in professional practice.

For example, a teacher might be more than full-time teaching one new Master's subject in a distant location, writing a book, and supervising a difficult research project. Yet the same person could have a very light load teaching a certificate subject in six nearby places if he already knew the subject well.

The earlier TEE literature decreased some demands on teachers by encouraging the idea that they did not require subject matter expertise. Part of the reason was the dependence on self-teaching materials (often PI texts) and partly because they wanted students to become practitioners rather than subject matter experts. Admittedly, staff need less expertise to use self-teaching materials than to teach the same subject by lecture because the book takes on most of the teacher's job. In such cases, staff are tutors whose responsibilities are limited to leading tutorials. They do not determine the content matter or its evaluation, and they can have lower qualifications than normal teachers. In fact, using tutors is normal practice in many countries, even in prestigious universities.

On the other hand, many TEE delivery systems use self-study rather than self-teaching materials, and depend very heavily on the subject matter expertise of their staff. Even complete dependence on self-teaching materials and tutors does not mean that schools need no subject matter expertise. For a school to be responsible for what it teaches, it needs staff with enough expertise to write or evaluate textbooks, to consult on subject matter, and to defend the distinctives of the school.

Accreditors, then, need to pay no less attention to TEE schools in the same kinds of accountability and stability that they require of other schools.

# 7
# THE ROLE OF CURRICULUM MODELS

Curriculum theory is a more advanced branch of education than accreditation, and accreditation draws on it heavily, even if perhaps unconsciously. By analogy, progress in curriculum theory appears to foreshadow progress in accreditation, the development of the product approach being a good example. It follows that a discussion of accreditation must involve curriculum. The question of curriculum (what it is one is trying to do?) soon arises.

For an accreditor, perhaps the main advantage of studying curriculum is to see how its models parallel those of evaluation and quality, and how they relate to each other. Some of the recurring themes are product/goals, negotiation with input from all parties, statements of values, academic content, and quantitative criteria.[8] It is almost possible to lay out a bidimensional matrix with many of the themes on one axis and curriculum, conceptions of quality, and program evaluation models on the other. Although not all models correspond perfectly, they match closely enough to make the following chapters appear slightly repititious.

Studies of curriculum also help the accreditor to be able to identify the extreme forms and the characteristic weaknesses and strengths of each model. Curriculum models are not a way for accreditors to classify types of degrees because programs often use models eclectically. There is no point in doing so anyway as long as programs are responsibly structured. Besides, the choice of curriculum model is the prerogative of the school.

Definitions of curriculum are so numerous that none is definitive. It not only includes what teachers teach but can also include what they try to teach or unintentionally teach. Alternatively, others suggest that it is what students learn, either exclusively from what teachers do or from their total school learning experience. (*Cf.* Print, 1985:8)

Curricula take many forms. Below is a very brief, almost simplistic, description of six main models based on Print. The various ways of arranging content is a separate topic, even though they roughly parallel curriculum models. (Print, 1985:75ff; Deal and Nolan give a similar outline.) Each of the first five models in some way or another presents a unique concept of what sort of knowledge students should have, and how one should evaluate it. The core values of each of these models contribute something important to an understanding of education:

*Means-end models*. Tyler (1949) developed the first major version of this model, which is flexible, much-modified, and apparently more scientific. It starts by forming objectives, then formulates ways to achieve them. During and after instruction, teachers use these objectives to

8 It is noteworthy that some of these parallel management styles, such as management by objectives (product/goals) and total quality management (input from all parties). An interdisciplinary study would be most interesting, as the lessons from one discipline might well apply in the others.

evaluate student progress. Others, such as Taba (1962), Wheeler (1974), and Nicholls and Nicholls (1972), added parts, reordered others, and emphasized its cyclical structure. (Although Tyler's model was actually cyclical is often mistakenly represented as linear. [Tyler, 1949:123; *cf.* Brady, 1983:175]) In the last step of the cycle, curriculum developers review their results and modify their objectives, so the cycle can start again. Brady goes one step further, describing a model in which the same elements are handled in almost any order at all, which is what often happens anyway. (1983:64ff)

Some curriculum developers use a stricter form which is less compatible with other curriculum models. They start by surveying the felt needs of the population they intend to teach, and use survey results to formulate behavioral objectives.

All variations depend on means-ends thinking, and most modern curricula fall into this category. They assume the same central values as the means-ends conception of quality and that the steps in the cycle should be consistent with each other, that is, that instruction and evaluation should fit program objectives. They emphasize functionality over content.

*Academic model.* Perhaps the oldest of all approaches, it teaches the accumulated wisdom of the past, those movements presently in vogue, and the thoughts of great thinkers. It groups information according to academic disciplines, and stresses independent critical thought and rigorous examinations. One of its main values is the worth of disciplinary knowledge; it focuses on content.

*Cognitive model.* The cognitive curriculum does not emphasize learning information so much as thinking skills. Basically the student must learn how to learn; he must be able to find information, use it to make inferences, analyze it, create new variations of it, and evaluate it. It uses disciplinary knowledge and thorough evaluation. It values thinking skills most highly and is a content-based view of curriculum.

*Humanistic model.* The teacher provides situations and resources so that each student can discover meanings that assist in his unique personal development; it is analogous to spiritual development. Teachers do not predetermine outcomes, which they assume will take many different forms; they evaluate students by monitoring individual growth. Its core values are the student's personhood and personal experience, and in many ways, it parallels the environment or experience model of quality. It is a person-oriented approach to curriculum, conceiving content to be primarily personal.

*Problem-solving model.* This model appears mostly in technological training and in-house professional staff development in industry. It assumes that the corporation faces problems or deficiencies, and that solving problems will increase productivity and profits. This type of curriculum is intensely practical, blends readily with other approaches, and tends to favor the adult (androgenous) learner. Knowledge of theory is a means to a problem-solving end. It produces a great deal of situation-specific, practical research. Teachers and managers evaluate learning pragmatically, asking themselves whether proposed solutions and innovations would really work. (Boud, 1986, esp. pp. 240-242; *cf.* Margetson, 1987) The model leans heavily towards functionality rather than content.

*Negotiation model.* This conception describes how people with various conflicting opinions negotiate with each other to agree on a particular curriculum design. It does not really prescribe what schools should teach or how to structure a curriculum development project, so in some ways it is not particularly helpful. However, it describes what usually happens anyway in spite of other models. Its key element is the truth that curricula are negotiated, not just for-

mulated; this aspect is very relevant to accreditation, despite the relative insignificance of this curriculum model. (*Cf.* Print, 1985:33)

*Eclectic approaches*. It is easy and practical to combine two or more of the first five models, and almost all combine with the sixth in practice. The means-end model does not necessarily imply a view of content other than that it must be teleological. Consequently, it has for accreditation the very important property of being able to facilitate other models. It does not normally mesh with a humanistic view, although Clute produces behavioral objectives that have open-ended responses. Some of his objectives have the characteristics of affective objectives but he uses them for cognitive content. (See Clute, 1978:11; *cf.* also Print, 1987:25, 71)

This list excludes one model because it is not really a method of curriculum. The social reconstructionist model is a belief that education should change society, and is often at least as much a leftist ideology as a curriculum model. One of its key values is social relevance. Some social reconstructionists believe that schools are too separate from society, or that education should be a democratizing process, or that education is a manipulative strategy in which students are merely tools.

A simple way to create great amounts of literature is to play these models off against each other. For example, a large amount of remote, disciplinary knowledge can contrast sharply with personal growth or areas of immediate interest. (Pring, 1976:48ff, 64ff) That is, the academic model appears to be inconsistent with the humanistic model. Similarly, Boud contrasts the academic model with the problem-solving model. (1986:238f) There is more to gain in becoming a little eclectic. To return to Pring's example, he seems justified in saying that memorizing information for an examination is hardly education if it leaves students untransformed (pp. 52f).

While not all imply a concept of quality, some curriculum models at least imply ideal kinds of learning. Of those not mentioned in the chapter on quality, the academic model idealizes disciplinary knowledge, the cognitive model thinking skills, the humanistic model personal development, and the problem-solving model idealizes problem-solving ability. (As kinds of learning, all models are cognitive in the sense that cognitivism refers to that which is learnt.)

Perhaps of more direct relevance to accreditation is the matter of impression. A school using the academic model appears to have high standards because it supposedly emphasizes academic content, even though its program might actually be quite weak. Similarly, an excellent school with remarkably high standards which uses a problem-solving curriculum can appear to be no more than a simple training program. A school can falsely give the appearances of raising standards by doing no more than changing to an academic curriculum model.

The normal definition of nontraditional education uses only means-ends terms, that is, the use of non-campus means to reach ends equivalent to those of on-campus education. Other models can create new directions for nontraditional education, and some nontraditional schools already use them without articulating them. For example, Bynner (1986:23-25), Laverty (1988), and Kinsler (1985:9) describe nontraditional Master's degrees that are more academic than means-ends based. (See Keegan and Rumble, 1982a for a brief but wider view.)

While it is easy to manipulate the models of curriculum to devise supposedly revolutionary innovations, it is also easy to make them appear quite similar and easy to integrate with each other. For example, a graduate reading-writing program could take the following different forms:

*Means-Ends*. The teacher specifies the learning objectives of the program and suggests some helpful books. Evaluation depends on the objectives.

*Academic*. The student writes a formal essay on an agreed topic. He reviews current publications, describes the current state of knowledge on the subject, and provides analysis and evaluation where necessary.

*Cognitive*. The student writes an essay analyzing a complex problem, relating relevant theory and generating various possible solutions.

*Humanistic*. The student suggests a topic which he feels will be to his benefit. If the supervisor approves, the student negotiates a reading list with him. On the basis of his reading, the student makes journal notes of what he learns, how he responds to the reading material, how he integrates different opinions, and how he would personally apply what he learns. Evaluation is based on the journal.

*Problem-solving*. The student finds a significant problem and finds both literature and non-literature information for a research bibliography. He then formulates a solution to the problem and presents it in a formal report. Evaluators mainly ask, "How satisfactorily is the problem solved?"

Most of the curriculum models have extreme forms, which are by nature unhealthy. These extremes warn accreditors that normally compatible models can be made to become incompatible with each other; they are summarized as follows:

*Means-ends extreme*: Needs are the only basis of curriculum, and educators can and should predetermine all specific learning outcomes. (Tyler himself disagreed with both these ideas saying that no single source is adequate to provide objectives, and preferring some measure of generality. 1949:5, 57; also 58ff) Unless the teacher controls and evaluates every detail of what happens in class, students will not learn effectively. (Contr. Ferrarra, 1987:16f)

*Academic extreme*: Disciplinary knowledge is the only valid type and is in essence always relevant.

*Cognitivist extreme*: All present knowledge is worthless because it is inflexible and will soon be obsolete. A program of study cannot teach everything which the student will need to know, so schools should only teach students how to learn.

*Humanist extreme*: These beliefs are pseudo-religious, such as self-actualization. Students are basically good and do not need control or discipline. Educators should never try to predetermine specific learning outcomes. When humanism extends to content rather than curriculum, it can imply a philosophical basis in mysticism and secular humanism, and the model takes some extreme non-school and anti-traditional forms. Teaching can become group counselling where learning is affective, unconscious, and almost unspecifiable. (Raven, 1991:71f)

*Problem-solving extreme*: Academic theory is always useless and only applied knowledge has value.

Accreditors are then trapped between two options. On one hand, schools should be free to choose curriculum models, and accreditors cannot give unfair priority to the values of a particular curriculum model, especially if it is interpreted in terms that make it incompatible with other models. On the other hand, accreditors must predetermine them to some extent because they closely parallel types program evaluation. The worst-case scenario is that an accreditor chooses one type of very narrowly-defined curriculum model to the exclusion of oth-

ers. The accreditor thus predetermines an equally narrow kind of program evaluation, concept of quality, and even the type of knowledge that students may learn. It does not help that the academic model seems to have overly influenced accreditation processes, as manifest in the prominent role of peer review by content experts. It could equally happen to another model; for example, an extreme means-ends curriculum with rigid objectives and predetermined answers also unfairly dictates a pattern of program evaluation.

It is possible to resolve this tension. If schools avoided extreme forms and expressed what they want students to learn, then means-ends models can facilitate other curriculum models and program evaluation.

With these lessons in mind, one is ready to study the various views of educational quality and types of accreditation and program evaluation.

# 8
# CONCEPTIONS OF QUALITY

"Quality" is one of education's vaguest ideas. A great many books and articles on educational quality never define it, using their pages to discuss evaluation or being content to promote idiosyncratic views of curriculum or schooling. In a book entitled Improving the Quality of Schooling, for example, Hopkins devotes less than a page to defining quality. (1987:4f) If accreditors want to certify it, they need to conceptualize it clearly in flexible enough terms to suit various curriculum models and program styles. As these chapters show, no current conception of quality is so faultless that it can stand alone, and hardly any is so weak that it can never be used. This is more than simple eclecticism; the nature of the beast is that it is necessarily multifaceted.

Quality is not is not necessarily the same as expensive education or big schools (*e.g.,* Solmon, 1981:12), nor excellence, which is usually the idea that schools should aim to be of high quality rather than be content with meeting minimum standards. On the point of excellence, Perry notes that academics have traditionally seen their highest goal as the formation of scholars, although only a select few eventually become scholars. Perry observes that an education system also needs to provide for the majority of its students who take careers outside academia. (1976:53, 282f)

The idea of effectiveness is attractive, but Murphy shows that it is complex and unclear. With its so far unreconciled views, it is a microcosm of models that are analogous to models of program evaluation. (1987:48f)

A key issue in the different views of quality, is its referent, that is, what it is that is said to have quality. Referents vary markedly between models, reflecting different conceptualizations of education; those that are clear are identified.

The conceptions below either come or can be derived from the literature so far, and they undergird different views of curriculum, program evaluation, and accreditation.

**The Speaker-approval View**

"Purr words" are a category of words which, largely devoid of conceptual content, and do little more than signify the speaker's approval. (Leech, 1974:51f) The term *quality* often seems like this; it is the norm rather than the exception to use it without definition. Consequently, to say that a school has quality without implying a clear meaning of quality is to invite the criticism that one is only saying that he likes it. Being conceptually vacuous, this is the most useless of all meanings of quality.

Dressel wryly notes how academics can easily lose their objectivity. They cannot say what quality is, but they are sure they are producing it. They complain about funding cuts lowering quality, but when cuts come, they will not admit publicly that standards are lower. Every program has high quality judged by its own definition of quality. (1976:381)

**The Ineffable View**

Some educators conceive of quality as too complex and situation-specific for human words to describe. For all practical purposes, infinitely many things are part of "quality" so no single description can suffice. (George, 1982:46; *cf.* also Pirsig, 1975:178; HEC, 1992:5f) As Dressel says, there are no clear criteria of success that have met general consensus, and with nothing to talk about, the ineffable view is sometimes no different from the speaker-approval view of quality. (1976:381) Quality is like the king's new clothes.

The great weakness of this view is that it prevents much further discussion. Fortunately, it usually has some friends. One is the idea that the goals of education are ultimately ineffable (discussed later) and the other is the consensus view of quality.

**Value for Money**

Another contemporary view of quality is value for money. It is actually is a kind of non-definition in that it provides no definition of quality itself, that is, of what it is for which one pays. However, it shows that, given the law of diminishing returns and normal finacial constraints, program directors must find an optimum cost/benefit compromise. However, this gives rise to the question of who must decide what is reasonable compromise and what is scrimping that unduly affects the program quality. From the consumers' viewpoint, a product that is not as good as another might be preferable if it costs considerably less. This might even be construed as an ethical issue; very poor value for money appears dishonest at some ill-defined point.

**Structuralism**

Another of the least helpful concepts of quality is structuralism, the idea is that quality is organizational structure. Some accreditors have largely assumed that the prominent element in quality education is good institutional, financial, time, and academic management, their prescribed employment policies, and predetermined credit structures. Brennan mentions it as "organizational characteristics" as opposed to intellectual content. (1986:153)

Despite having some value, these things do not in themselves give a reasonable assurance that students learn anything. By overemphasizing program management, they give inadequate attention to teaching and learning. (Hefferlin, 1974:154f, 165f; also Pomerville, 1973:31)

**Comparative View**

Some writers see quality as a comparison between institutions. For Seneca and Taussig, quality is what the most prestigious institutions do that others want to emulate. (1987:27) Similarly, Solmon reports the peculiarly American idea of rating schools in order starting from the "best"; he wisely adds that it is wrong and harmful always to view those not at the top as failures (1981:8, 12). Johnes and Taylor suggest that schools compare the quality of their graduates. (1987:582) George gives one description of quality as reputation, especially in the opinions of peers. (1982:46)

This idea of quality is also very weak. Admittedly, some schools simply are better than others but the view is fraught with problems. While it can stimulate well-known institutions into healthy competition (Solmon, 1981:9), it is not necessarily accurate (p. 8) and has nothing to offer small, new, or innovative programs, no matter how good they are. Its greatest weakness, however, is that it completely begs the question of what ranking criteria one uses. Webster's survey of various ranking methods is particularly good. He lists their weaknesses and strengths, and concludes that no ranking system by itself is adequate. He also notes that it is

"remarkable" how few quality rankings have been based on how much students learn. (Webster, 1981)

**Intensity**

Peters and Austin mention that intensity and dedication do more to ensure a high-quality program than what is actually done. An otherwise bad program with lots of vitality, empathy, and intensity can be much better than a program with good methods and no intensity. (1985:465ff) According to this view, quality refers to teachers' attitudes.

This factor affects educational research in the form of the Hawthorne effect. That is, experimental subjects respond differently when they know that they are part of an experiment; they try harder to make the experiment a success. For example, an experimenter might test a very poor teaching method. If the experiment's teachers realize they are part of an experiment using a new method and become enthusiastic, they might actually produce good learning results. That experimenters in education work so hard to neutralize this factor is acknowledgement of its power. (*Cf.* Tuckman, 1978:102f)

This view is most relevant to the interpersonal models of evaluation, which give much more prominence to the personal opinions and values of program participants.

**Environment or Experience**

In this view, quality is that to which students are exposed which evokes learning, and not so much what students are shown to have learned. Quality refers to environment or student's personal experience of learning.

George describes it as good process characteristics, such as good delivery systems, teaching, intellectual climate, and school morale. (1982:48) Hopkins expresses it as "learning climate" and the "teaching-learning process" (1987:4), and Bliss as students realizing their potential and their individual learning goals (1988:8). Carr speaks of it as the school's aspirations and its ethos (1986:25), almost equating it with excellence. Levine talks about the environment and culture of the school as shared beliefs and values, and their result in the quality of teaching. (1986:150-152; see also Barnett, 1987:281) This view best suits interactive models of teaching and humanistic models of curriculum, and it indirectly implies an interpersonal model of program evaluation.

**The Value-added View**

A number of writers list the value-added view as a type of quality. This view asks how far the student travelled during his study, without enquiring where he was when he started or finished. In other words, how much "value" did education add to the student? The idea is that a remarkably good student would start well ahead of the average student, but both would learn equal amounts. According to this view, the referent of quality is the aspect of the school seen as a catch-up or accelerator program.

Strictly speaking, value-added evaluation is empirical and belongs to the quantitative rather than qualitative class of program evaluations. Consequently, it is not a suitable way for an accreditor to evaluate schools. Tyler proposed value-added studies in his theory of curriculum and it became a specialized field. A researcher uses a predetermined set of objectives to test students before and after instruction so he can draw conclusions about how much "value" was added to them. In other words, this type of study aims to show how much the school taught, and whether the school only evaluates what student already knew. Despite being gen-

erally too difficult for widespread use, some government authorities have tried to demand that schools make them an internal procedure.

(Tyler, 1949:106; Bloom, 1970:28-30; Stake, 1970:87; Ball and Halwachi, 1987:400; Browne, 1984:46; Ewell, 1987:24; HEC, 1992:7; *cf.* also Solmon, 1981:11f. Barnett [1988b:17--20] and Dressel [1976:7] discuss some theoretical problems with value-added studies.)

At an experimental level, this closely resembles an objectives and product approach. The difference is that adding value means that students finish at different places, whereas uniform objectives imply that all students arrive at about the same place. Otherwise, value-added thinking cannot stand alone; it relies on some other model (usually product) even to measure the amount of value which is added.

The concept of value-added quality has several important advantages. It is useful for monitoring student progress. Besides, a weak student who puts in the effort to become average is in a way better than an above-average student who is satisfied with maintaining average results, even though both get the same results. The student who learns a great deal from a practicum gets more benefit that an already-capable student who does no more than what he already knows. The value-added view can reveal that an elite school with very capable graduates might really be achieving very little if it accepts only the best applicants and does not exploit their potential. Similarly, "average" schools are very successful if applicants of average ability generally become above-average achievers.

In essence, value-added thinking rejects absolute standards. In fact, its greatest value lies in showing that standards cannot be absolute. Lower stands are justified when culture, not educational short-cutting, makes schools include lots of basic teaching.

Examples abound. Schools can only achieve less when applicants have had an "empty typewriter" high school education. With a preconception of education that discourages creativity and initiative, students are disadvantaged when they enter a program that focuses on real learning. Many non-Western students have less general knowledge about their field of study when they commence study. (This is particularly the case in theological studies where many students are first generation Christians and can only start at a lower rung on the ladder.) In studying culture-related subjects like theology, the literature in that language and culture might be at such an early stage of development that schools cannot aim to have a strongly academic program based on a long tradition and a large literature. "University entrance" implies vastly different levels between countries with very different standards of general education. One country's Bachelor's degree can be another country's Master's degree. Such realities show that international accreditation cannot completely escape relativism.

Despite the valid variations of degree meaning between schools and countries, value-added thinking is no excuse for overly relativizing the meaning of degrees. The approach means that weak students could pass at a very low standard by travelling as far as stronger students; no longer would one student's degree be similar to another's. In the same way, a weak school could use the value-added principle to try to justify degrees with very low standards. If an association wants graduates of its member schools to be able to continue education elsewhere, it needs to maintain the standards of degrees that are normally used as prerequisites for further education.

**Metricism**

Metricism, a term adapted from Ferris *et al.*'s analogy of the strict definition of the meter length (1986:3), is the idea that educational quality can be reduced to statistical information.

For example, accreditors can require schools to have a certain ratio of full-time staff to students, so many books in the library, so many doctorates, and so much lecture-room space.

Metricism is not at all new. In 1976, Dressel wrote that quantitative evaluation (including measurement) was already obsolete as a means of determining program quality (p. 3). Surprisingly, however, its variations survive so well in the literature. Metricism takes several major forms, all of which obscure rather than illuminate the meaning of quality.

*a. Length of time.* The longer a program takes, the higher its supposed quality. For example, it is easy and practical to describe study in numbers of hours, and degrees in numbers of years of full-time study. It is also helpful to plan for course work to take a specified length of time during which students should work to capacity.

Nevertheless, the use of time totals alone is very inadequate. It says nothing about what type of learning students have, and is as feeble as any other effort to reduce education to numbers. Three-year bachelor programs can be quite equivalent (although not the same) as four-year bachelor programs by being more disciplinary and scientific.

*b. Resources.* Quality, supposedly, is a simple list of statistics. The school should have a certain ratio of full-time staff to students, so many books in the library, so many doctorates, and so much lecture-room space. (Ferris, 1986:3f) However, a lecturer might be boring, confusing, outdated, or over-opinionated. He might set a poor example, lecture simplistically, give too many dispensations, or use class time irresponsibly. Yet some of the most reputable accreditation agencies will accept him if he has the right degree from the right school and schedules the right amount of class time.

*c. Standardized Tests and Examination Results.* Some writers suggest this as the best quality measure. For example, Bee and Dolton (1985) suggest that in the English system, the proportion of first class and upper second class honors degrees compared with student intake three years earlier, adequately gauges "quality." Lerner (1986) argues that aptitude tests of verbal and mathematical reasoning ability give the most reliable and standardizable results. She mentions the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) as a good example (*cf.* also Hopkins, 1987:4f).

Tests can be very valid if they qualitatively examine real learning or aptitude, and a school and its accreditor would be foolhardy to ignore below-average scores on a relevant, standard test. SAT has the favorable point of being as free as possible from bias toward any type of curricular content (Lerner, 1986:189) and it seems to work very well for the population for which it was designed. Governments can usefully require system-wide standardized testing when student populations are sufficiently homogenous and institutional goals are very similar. Even then, however, the criterion of quality is what the tests measure, not the scores themselves. That is, test scores can only correlate with a concept of quality assumed in a given test.

For accreditors, testing and examination results are not at all a suitable model of quality. Not only do they share many of the weaknesses of indicators (see below), tests can vary in quality, and suitable tests do not always exist. Standardized testing does not easily lend itself to a highly stratified society with many ethno-linguistic groups. Private international accreditors (such as those of ICAA) have no right to impose standardized testing on autonomous schools; schools would only accept it voluntarily if they saw it to be beneficial. Deciding the role of examinations in a school's program is likewise the prerogative of the school, not the accreditor.

Other than that, emphasis on examination results can take a very extreme form. As Hopkins points out, it reduces educational quality to examination-passing, and teaching to test

preparation, thus possibly lowering the quality of teaching. (1987:5) This is to go further than to admit the validity of means-ends thinking; it is to create two potential dangers. The first is the assumption that accreditors have the right to impose a strict means-ends curriculum value on schools at the expense of the role of teaching as an interactive process between teachers and students. The second is that it is counter-productive if it moves students' attention away from understanding the subject and onto rote-learning to pass examinations.

*d. Educational indicators.* This approach assumes that quality is expressible in the kinds of standardizable statistics preferred by planners and decision-makers. Almost any statistic, no matter how indirectly related to quality, can become an educational indicator, including time, resources, and test results. The idea of indicators is not new, and its literature is as extensive as it is inconclusive.

It is probably fair to say that many indicators are helpful. Given a poor showing on relevant indicators, most responsible schools would take a careful look at their program. Indicators can be valid if they suit all schools equally. Moreover, most statistics have some underlying value; for example, a criterion asking for six thousand usable titles in a library really tries to ensure that students have adequate access to complex information. (*Cf.* ATA, 1987:4-6)

No indicator, however, represents quality. Rutherford claims to have developed indicators for qualitative measurement in higher education, but they depend so greatly on judgments by peer review and on arbitrary categories that they show little promise as a system of indicators. (1987a; see also Rutherford 1987b:103)

Lining up valid objections to indicators is easy, and many of them apply to statistical measures of quality in general. They show either that indicators fail to indicate quality or that present methodologies are inadequate:

1. The theoretical base of indicators is still very weak (Stern and Hall, 1987:6). They are not based on a substantiated model of education (Smith, 1988:489), so it is not surprising that there are too many suggested indicators but as yet too little consensus on which ones to use. (Eide, 1987:10) As a model is a simplification of reality, a single model cannot be comprehensive enough to portray reality accurately; even a theory can hardly claim to be the only possible explanation of all phenomena in a field of study.
2. Consequently, lists of statistics are too inflexible. There is no consensus on "good education" because different individuals and groups value different outcomes differently. (Eide, 1987:10) Many indicators are so restricted in scope that they can be irrelevant to the concerns of those involved. Selecting certain aspects of a program for making statistics can exclude other information more relevant to particular programs. (Dyer, 1973:33)
3. Quantitative methods are not yet adequate. For example, many important aspects of education are not yet quantifiable (Eide, 1987:9) and the tendency is to measure unimportant things that are easy to measure. (Rutherford, 1987b:96; Barnett, 1988a:101) Ways of aggregating statistics are still too imprecise (Stern and Hall, 1987:6) and defining outcomes is still problematical, with no concise, completely unambiguous method. (Eide, 1987:10; Dyer, 1973:19; Barnett, 1988b:21) Even if such outcome definitions were possible, it is questionable whether they could be epistemologically honest, as they would refer to simple knowledge. (Atomistic objectives are discussed in a later chapter.)
4. Some indicators depend on human judgments, assuming that individual biases will average out. However, statistics become unreliable when biases consistently favor particular values. (Dyer, 1973:32f)

5. Indicators are difficult to interpret. (Smith, 1988:488) For example, dropout rate[9] is a statistical measure without a philosophical value-base. Even if it is agreed that high drop-out rates are undesirable, it is less certain what they indicate. A high dropout rate alone might signify poor student services, inadequate admission requirements, or dissatisfied students. It might also signify high product standards in a good school, or particular delivery systems like correspondence, which normally have very high dropout rates.
6. Indicators are political. Politics plays a role in their formulation and hinders agreement on concrete forms. They are subject to political incentives and disincentives. (Smith, 1988:489) The use of incentives puts unfair pressure of evaluees to conform, or even to "pervert" the reporting system. (Smith, 1988:490) For example, managerialists can use indicators to exercise power over academics. (Barnett, 1988a) While the intended accountability is laudable, this is hardly a valid use of power in accreditation.
7. Teachers might not take much notice of them anyway. (Fuhrman, 1988:486)
8. Indicators assume comparability between schools and similarity between delivery systems. The assumption does not hold when programs are very different; both schools and school populations can be different. (Stern and Hall, 1987:6; Smith, 1988:490) To make matters worse, decisions about indicators are seldom made at local levels, where they would be more useful. (Fuhrman, 1988:486) They become even less meaningful when students come from different cultures and educational backgrounds, and when institutions vary in models of schools, delivery systems, philosophies of education, and kinds of degrees. As statistical measures cannot suit all situations, accreditors cannot justifiably enforce them. For example, some programs, such as individually tutored higher degrees, might require a much higher staff-student ratio than is average.
9. A set of indicators only reflects selected aspects, never a whole educational system. As a result, it inherits the limitations of quantitative evaluation without the strengths of either qualitative or quantitative evaluation. At least in good quantitative evaluation, evaluators can select program aspects that are relevant to the programs being evaluated.
10. Indicators are indirect; they hardly ever deal what students actually learn. (Barnett: 1988a:102) Consequently they make unexamined assumptions (*cf.* Stern and Hall, 1987:6). Statistics are by nature arbitrary; they give a number rather than the principle for determining how much is enough.

Some indicators relate to teaching rather than learning. Means consequently become ends; if indicators are used to measure means, then program personnel aim to improve their means, without regard to the real aims of the program. (Barnett: 1988a:102)

Many are even further removed from student learning, emphasizing factors like facilities and staff qualifications which at best only promote good teaching. (Cross *et al.*, 1974:166) For example, accreditors become interested in the percentage of staff with doctorates. Their assumptions are questionable; it does not necessarily follow that having more staff with doctorates will somehow promote better research supervision, that doctors are better teachers, or that they use their extra knowledge in everyday teaching. Another false assumption is that lower student-teacher ratios mean that students get greater personal attention, or that more books in the library means that students will read and learn more from them. Metricist sys-

9 Kaiser et al. (1981) mention a wide variety of factors, although they mainly relate to alternative education in terms of delivery systems rather than a particular philosophy of quality. Many kinds of studies on dropout rates in distance education have been done; see de Freitas and Lynch (1986) for a particularly useful survey.

tems never seek to prove the truth of these assumptions. (Dyer, 1973:19f) Yet another indefensible assumption of many indicator systems is a cause-effect relationship between teaching and outcome, which is very hard to prove. (*Ibid.*:20f) They incorrectly assume that if the teacher teaches, then the students learn. (When they do not learn, the "empty typewriter" syndrome occurs.) Hard evidence of a cause-effect relationship is especially difficult to get in forms of higher education where students initiate learning or study independently.

Statistics make too many other assumptions. Of course it is normally true that library-dependent programs can suffer through lack of books, that poorly informed teachers tend to lower standards, and that too many students in a normal classroom situation does not encourage good learning. The situation is much more complex than that, as later chapters will show. Suffice it to say at this stage that these assumptions only tend to true, and are sometimes untrue. The questions then arise, "Under what conditions are they untrue? Are they ever a hindrance?"

(See also Smith, 1988; Rutherford, 1987a; Ball and Halwachi, 1987; Haley, 1988; Madgic, 1988; Litten and Hall, 1989; Gregory, 1991:49)

**The Product View**

In this view, the quality of education is the quality of the objectives it reaches. Using means-ends thinking, it inquires into the "product," that is, what the student has done to show that he has learned something as predetermined in a set of objectives. Its essential values are purposefulness, fitness for purpose, and the articulation and realization of purposes. HEC (1992:6) even goes so far as to call name the product view "fitness for purpose".

The original analogy was to a factory; manufacturing processes contribute to making a product. Many educators accepted a sharp process-product differentiation for a long time, but the distinction has now become less sharp. In a field such as education, process and product are so intimately interrelated that too distinct a differentiation is often unrealistic and artificial. (*Cf.* Dressel, 1976:51, *etc.*)

The product view is closely akin to behavioral objectives and particular models of curriculum, evaluation, and accreditation. It is so difficult to discuss them in isolation that it is perhaps best to discuss the general issues under the topic of quality.

Besides normal course work objectives, another important type of product is research and writing projects. For this reason, major thesis programs normally do not have a semester hour rating; the quality of the product is far more important than time expenditure. No school ever accepted a doctoral dissertation based on how long it took to write.

Some sources mention product quality as little more than the ability to reach goals (*e.g.,* Hopkins, 1987:4). Some additional elements are no more than part of goal-reaching, such as reaching the target group of a program and meeting real needs. (House, 1982:5-8; Freedman, 1987:165-167) Other authors mention seven variations of this view of quality:

*a. Ways of reaching goals.* In a means-end mentality, this is the means. The idea is that a school should not only show that it achieves its goals, but that it should check the quality of the ways it achieves them. Young includes it in his definition of quality, (Young, ed., 1983:450f) and Smith divides it into two parts, one being inputs and resources and the other being processes (1988:488). Wentling (1980:17) includes the evaluation of processes because qualitative evaluation by definition evaluates the whole program, not just outcomes. Brenninkmeijer, *et al.* (1985) mention the efficient use of means, appropriate planning, and cost-effec-

tiveness. Similarly, House asks whether a program is efficient, how much it costs, and if it is cost-effective (1982:5-15). If a program achieves its goals, it might still have a quality problem if it has poorly organized content, wastes its resources, costs more than the institution can realistically afford, or costs too much for what it produces.

*b. Conformance between goals and actions.* (George, 1982:47) If what the school does suits its goals, then the program has quality, on this count at least. Needless to say, organizations easily busy themselves with activities that do not support their goals. The interpersonal models say more on this matter because the product view lacks the means to differentiate between goal-achieving and what the people in the program really do.

*c. Immediate post-instruction product.* The behavioral objectives literature often assumes that product refers to what students can do immediately after instruction. Unfortunately, this means that teachers should formulate specific objectives for each instruction period. Accreditors cannot enforce this and interactive, process-oriented teachers do not do it anyway.

*d. Product at the end of the subject.* For example it is not too difficult to write a list of specific, useful objectives for an individual subject, like Philosophy 206 or History 101. Means-ends curriculum developers suggest this level of goal, although they sometimes call them "aims" or "general objectives."

*e. Graduation product.* Some writers refer to the product at the end of the program of study, although the literature does not differentiate it from immediate post-instruction product or end-of-subject product. These conceptions of product often appear to be the meaning of effectiveness (House, 1982:5-8) and outcomes (Smith, 1988:488), and are sometimes translated into test scores. (House, 1982:5-8; *cf.* also George, 1982:48f) In this case, quality refers to graduates some time after graduation. (See also Elbow, 1971:241)

The product-at-graduation view is also quite compatible with research institutes and assessment programs which are more concerned with a tangible product (a thesis or a passed examination).

*f. Culminating product.* Some products are concrete pieces of work which represent the highest level of achievement of which the student is capable. Students in many Indonesian Bachelor of Theology programs formally present both a minor thesis and a project-like report of the major intensive practicum. These represent the culminations of the academic and practical aspects of their program.

*g. School product.* Especially in product-based accreditation, an important kind of product is defined in the school's statement of mission.

*h. Eventual product.* This kind of quality asks what students eventually do after graduation. Johnes and Taylor ask whether university graduates get jobs and how good their jobs are. (1987:582; also Barnett, 1987:281) Another variation mentions the accomplishments, professional expertise, and problem-solving ability of graduates. (Brenninkmeijer *et al.*, 1985; Solmon, 1981:7, 11; Freedman, 1987:105)

*h. Generic objectives.* In this view, quality is the extent to which a school's goals and activities contribute to achieving the aims of higher education. The literature of the subject is very large; many academics write their own lists of goals for theoretical reasons with little practical purpose. Some of the lists of objectives are useful in that they articulate assumptions which would otherwise be left unsaid. American education generally has included enculturation and communication skills, while British education tends to emphasize critical thinking. (See *e.g.,*

Dressel and Thompson, 1973:178; Dressel, 1976:31; George, 1982:49ff; Barnett, 1988a:100, 104-6) Perhaps Barnett is correct when he says that defining higher education purposes is a hermeneutic exercise; the people in the system are constantly re-interpreting their experience. (Barnett, 1988a:105, based on Habermas, 1978)

As product accreditation depends on each school being an internally consistent unit, the idea of generic objectives is the basis for consistency between schools and is one of the main ways of distinguishing between higher education and anything else.

Nevertheless, it has its own problems. First, there is not much point in evaluating particular lists because their content varies so greatly. As Barnett says, the problem is not that nobody knows, but that there are too many conceptions. (*Cf.* Barnett, 1988a:100) Besides, there is little hope that a major network of autonomous private schools will agree upon an expression of higher education goals that is concrete enough to demonstrate what schools should and should not do. It might even be impossible, because higher education goals are too generalized to have the advantages of specifics. It is doubtful whether such a statement of goals would be used anyway; there is little motivation to spend decades to test a statement operationally (even if it were possible), and little impetus to change should it be shown to be wrong.

Defining higher education as aims (*i.e.* teleologically) is not the only alternative either; it is equally valid to define what it is (*i.e.* ontologically).

Oddly enough, most lists of aims of higher education share a sameness, and the differences between them are mostly inconsequential. That institutions of higher education mainly teach and perform research is clear, but the correct or ideal relationship between teaching and research is a perennial and largely unresolved issue.

The goals of education are at best more a tentative conclusion than a starting-point in accreditation; a study of the types of degrees, the models of curriculum, the taxonomy of objectives, and the assumption of cognitivism all point towards particular conceptualizations of the types of knowledge that higher education is supposed to produce. No matter how helpful descriptive statements of educational goals are, they are not a prescriptive concept of quality. As descriptions, they are good examples of how strictly linear thought does not work. It is impossible to start at an ideal first cause and use it to prescribe programs. It is better to work with the subject at hand and describe its assumptions explicitly, defending them where necessary.

**Strengths of the Product View**

As an approach to quality, the product view has some major advantages. First, it is flexible. It fits any program no matter how unique or contextualized, as long as it can express its goals as objectives. It has already been noted that the JCSEE standards for qualitative evaluation still tend to use means-ends thinking even when evaluation does not use product definitions. Second, as an epistemologically "hard" view, it assumes effability; the issues of quality and the goals of education are essentially expressible in language. Another implication of being epistemologically hard is that students produce concrete evidence of learning; the view has the advantages of behavioral objectives.

Third, it provides a rational means-ends basis for formulating and evaluating programs; it is hard to deny that means should suit their ends. For example, whether on campus or in extension it is unfair to provide an education that includes only theoretical and research skills but expect graduates to be fully-developed practitioners. It is equally unfair to expect practitioner trainees to have the same academic skills as their scientific counterparts.

Fourth, the concept of product is valid and necessary; students need to be able to do the job for which they are trained. If they cannot, then the school has failed no matter how high its academic standards are and no matter how much its students learn. Besides, used correctly, the product approach helps minimize the empty typewriter syndrome, which is the result of clear means but unclear ends.

Fifth, it provides a way to respond to students who are already practitioners who might to a larger extent already be producing the "product" before graduating. The hoped-for change is then the discrepancy between the student's present skills and the program objectives.

Sixth, it suits both teaching and non-teaching schools. Schools which teach need good teaching. Assessment and research programs by definition do not teach and depend totally on product evaluation, at least as far as product can be separated from process. Admittedly, the notion that means should have quality is inconsistent with the view that only the product is important; the two are mutually exclusive. However, it would be an extreme view that a teaching school need not take any responsibility for its teaching, that is, its means. Otherwise, the two notions are alternatives rather that contradictory opposites.

**Solving Some of its Problems**

Some of its most important problems lay within reach of solution. It is easy to identify erroneously the product concept of quality with all the weaknesses of behavioral objectives. The most valid criticisms do not refer to the concept of quality but either to kinds of objectives or to the content which they represent. A later chapter responds to these problems in greater detail.

It might be argued that the product view does not have inbuilt criteria to evaluate objectives, in the same way that some have argued that it has no clear concept of the sources of objectives. In reply, it must be said that the criteria for any one set of objectives are highly complex; they include context, curriculum presage (philosophical presuppositions), learners' needs, and feedback from previous implementation. (*Cf. e.g.,* Print, 1987:22, 26f)

Furthermore, a strict product mentality does not suit people who prefer to think in terms of interactive processes. (Print, 1987:26) Dressel quite sensibly points out that many objectives reflect the learning processes needed to achieve the objective, not just a product. (1976:51) It can be better to simply change the mindset and keep the essential values. The product conception of quality really refers to what students learn. To criticize it is to say that education should be aimless or ineffable, hardly rational approaches to education.

*Too many levels?* It is both a strength and a weakness that the product view has so many different levels of product. Unfortunately, there is not much consensus about which ones are most important, and some are not normally differentiated. The list of levels gives the false impression that there are too many of them for accreditation purposes, and that objectives are intentionally given excessive emphasis.

In their favor, not all levels affect every program and not all affect accreditors. The levels almost make up a taxonomy because most levels supposedly subsume all levels beneath them. Teaching programs need to take responsibility for the ways they reach goals and the conformity between actions and goals. For the most part, this includes the immediate post-instruction product, which is really the responsibility of the teacher as part of the teaching process, who may well decide not to evaluate it. Some levels do not affect assessment programs, which by definition do not teach.

The product at the end of the subject is the lowest level that affects accreditors and supposedly it is part of the graduation product, which is a way of defining degrees. Culminating products can be the product at the end of either a subject or a degree; it may be the only activity in the program (such as the dissertation in an European research degree), or it may be the highest level, representing what was learnt in previous course work. When students achieve degree objectives, the school achieves its institutional purposes as stated in its statement of mission. Naturally schools like to see how successful their graduates eventually become, both as a source of program feedback, and to see how effectively they have achieved their goals.

*The tenuous link between cause and effect.* A satisfactory product description coupled with successful students does not prove that it is the school which caused the student's progress, especially in long-term programs. Measuring change over long periods is not a reliable guide to the success of the program, as people mature anyway whether or not they are studying. (Tuckman, 1978:97f) That is, evaluation procedures need methods other than the use of objectives. Additionally, student success at any stage is not totally dependent on the school; one cannot presume a strict cause-effect relationship between the school and later life. Some good students could succeed whichever school they choose. Graduates of even the best schools can drop out or fail professionally after graduation. It is almost a natural law of education that every program will produce some unintended outcomes; there will always be students whose learning will differ from what the school has planned.

Although a study of eventual products might give the best idea of overall success and be a very useful source of program feedback, the link between graduation and eventual products is quite vague. Its conclusions can say no more than what has tended to be the case, and cannot specify the extent to which the school gave graduates the knowledge which made them successful. Moreover, many programs simply do not have goals for eventual products, and they do not suit non-career generalist programs.

The links are very tenuous between what the student can do immediately after instruction, at the end of a subject, and at graduation time; they become even more tenuous in a long-term program. This relationship is a proverbial can of worms because it interrelates the value of instruction and the meaning of the degree, and a later chapter discusses it more fully.

The weak link between means and ends is not so much a fault in the product view of quality, but a warning against presuming too much in evaluation. Many other models do not even ask these questions. It is wrong to presume that evaluations should produce findings as certain as those produced under experimental conditions. In qualitative program evaluation, it is not necessary, possible, or even very helpful. (*Cf.* Cronbach, 1980:4f, 11)

*A softer view of product.* Many of its other so-called problems modify the model, showing how it includes epistemologically soft elements. As Houle has said, education refers to complex aspects of human beings which are highly resistent to mechanistic formulations. (1978:183) Seen in this light, some of these "problems" are not much more than valuable insights on how the model works. For example, the extremely hard version of the model assumes that programs are formulated logically in prescribed steps, whereas they are actually negotiated between people with different opinions who must come to consensus. It is worth remembering that means-ends curriculum evaluations use interpersonal and open-ended feedback systems.

As another example, practicing curriculum developers cannot follow the strict order of starting with objectives. The model has two starting points; the people in the program who

have a particular concept of what they intend to do, and the multifaceted needs of the target population. Besides, curriculum developers in reality seldom try to follow the order. (Houle, 1978:172; Skilbeck, n.d.:26; Print, 1987:26) It is better to see the product view of quality and the means-ends curriculum as a rationale rather than as a rigid method. Certainly Skilbeck's model of curriculum is based on that "dynamic" view of means-end elements. He uses means-ends thinking, but does not use step-by-step formulation to predicate a program upon its objectives. (Skilbeck, n.d.)

Moreover, Solmon says that, ideally, a product is a school's ability to meet its institutional goals, but in practice it is the available resources that correspond to the probability that a school will reach its objectives. (1981:7, based on Troutt, 1979)

Similarly, "product" is a moving target. Program goals are mainly imperfect strategies to meet a perceived set of needs, but real needs faced in the field can be quite different. Consequently, by attempting to meet real needs, the program can run quite differently from its design. Completely static programs simply do not exist; evaluation and modification start no later than when implementation begins, and sometimes even before then. (Cronbach, 1980) Programs do not actually produce exactly what they intended; the actual product differs from the intended product, and this is not necessarily bad. (Browne, 1984:49)

Scriven has complained that product evaluations fail to evaluate program goals, side-effects, and factors not included in the goals (such as cost, lost alternatives), because they use program goals as the criterion of success. (1986:63) He also adds that the "rhetoric of intent" is no substitute for evidence of real success and that side-effects can be more important and desirable than intended products. Program goals can even blind evaluators to anything other than what they see in the light of the goals. Not only that, a program's goals can be very different from what actually happens in the program, and the evaluator needs to evaluate the whole program. (Scriven, 1974:34-42) This does not mean that product evaluation is invalid, but that it needs an infusion of the wider scope and naturalistic methodology found in other models.

(See also George, 1982:48f; Kaiser *et al.*: 1981:82. Beard *et al.* is one of the few books specifically on objectives in higher education, but adds little to other works.)

**The Consensus View of Quality**

The quality of a program, at least in this view, is whatever a group of people decides it is after discussing it in the light of their shared and competing values. The group normally has different interest groups which must negotiate with each other. The dynamics of the organization determines what constitutes a consensus, who should reach it, and how they reach it. That is, quality is an interactive process resembling interactive models of teaching and negotiation and dynamic models of curriculum; its referent is the program conceived as a complex whole. The NUS put it another way, saying that it is futile to seek a universal definition of quality because quality is a value judgment made according to the values of particular people or groups. (1992:24f)

The idea of consensus plays an important role in maintaining standards, particularly relating to content. Consensus groups need to be large and capable enough to functionally maintain standards. For accreditors, the matter is rather simple; whichever way a school chooses, it must show that it has a capable consensus group. Tatum interprets Freedman's view of quality as an issue of perspective, mentioning three possibilities, the producer, the consumer, or a composite of both. (1987:650) The undeveloped producer-consumer theme echoes the issues

of goal-free evaluation, and the types of groups reflect some descriptors of the three main concepts of consensus group.

**The Importance of the Consensus View**

This view is highly influential, especially as traditional academia depends so heavily on consensus group evaluation. Perhaps its main weakness is that it provides only a sociological basis for ethics and educational ideals; it does not subscribe to ideals higher than group opinion. Like product accreditation, it depends on internal consistency, which brings its own share of problems and is discussed in a later chapter.

It has several major strengths. It has usually maintained high content standards, and assumes that infinitely many factors can affect quality. It also has the advantages of being qualitative and epistemologically "soft", and can utilize any other view of quality to which people are willing to agree.

To accept this view is to accept reality. Consensus has decision-making power to determine what will happen regardless of other factors; evaluation is partly a political process and in this sense at least, this view is obligatory. It is important, however, to differentiate between consensus groups as something that will happen anyway and as a positive tool in maintaining standards. (*Cf.* also Browne, 1984:45; Meyers, 1981:16)

To its credit, it does not *impose* values from outside the consensus group. Small groups often depend on wider consensus groups; for example, a school can find a guiding consensus in an association of schools, and an association can depend on a national education system or an international network.

*Internal to each school.* One kind of consensus group is the group of people who plays a part in the accountability structures of a school, including members of the board of governors, teaching staff, administrators, and thesis readers. North Americans aim to develop a highly qualified teaching staff so that each school has its own consensus group and so maintain its autonomy. Having a qualified faculty is the simplest and usually most practical consensus group for day-to-day internal quality control, and private accreditors normally require it. For example, Freedman says that the regular campus faculty can become the consensus group. (1987:163-165; *cf.* also Sadler, 1987:199)

If the regular teaching staff are the only members of the consensus group, a review of their degrees and the dynamics of their ways of forming consensus is sometimes almost enough for accrediting that aspect of the school. Freedman implies that degrees are an adequate assurance of quality (1987:164). In the past, it has been this group that has carried out the institutional self-evaluation for accreditation. Unfortunately, this tends to maintain conservative values, resist innovations, and protect the vested interests of staff. It also assumes that all staff have traditional accredited degrees, and does not work so well for staff whose foreign qualifications do not easily translate into local degrees, or for staff whose ability is equivalent to degreed personnel but are not so certified. (Better equivalency systems could circumvent this weakness if accreditors were to accept them.)

The consensus group extends no further than its own school, raising questions about how big it needs to be to maintain standards. The size of a faculty depends on the school's delivery systems and its optimum student-teacher ratio; some types of school can have too few faculty members to maintain standards. Relapsing to metric criteria does not help; the number of staff depends on the school and the abilities of its staff.

Another kind of consensus group, which is also limited to the school, is the academic advisory council. The council should take active responsibility for standards, not just lend the names of well-known scholars to act as a nominal "rubber stamp." This option is most needed in schools that are very new or small or have staff without traditional qualifications, but it can still play a significant role in larger schools.

*Degrees.* Accreditation methods have traditionally assumed that academic degrees represent consensus groups. Degrees, presumably, are a measure of expertise according to the standards of the school that issued the degree. A school seeks a consensus group with other schools by accepting their graduates as teachers. For example, if a teacher has a Master's degree from a good school, it is assumed that he has mastered his field of content well enough to teach it in a Bachelor program at an academic standard comparable to his old school. He will remember what his school expected of him as a student and expect something comparable of his students.

One does not need to be much of a philosopher to see the weaknesses of the assumption, especially if it is extended to say that students would learn comparable amounts to their teacher's Bachelor program. It needs some obvious qualifications, including (among others) the teacher's teaching ability, his field of expertise, his concern for standards, and the similarity of student populations.

The problem of credentialism has already been mentioned, and it is not the only problem in the assumption. One cannot assume that teaching staff are unaffected by what they perceive to be the academic standards in the school where they teach. A well-qualified teacher can easily lower his expectations if he perceives that his students are generally of low ability.

Furthermore, some schools follow the instructional institution model so closely that some teachers only appear on campus to teach. Although they determine what goes on in the classroom and often take responsibility in evaluating students, they contribute little to the faculty's policies on quality. In extreme cases, the academic dean alone develops policies on program quality.

Overdependence on degrees as a measure of quality decreases dependence on consensus within schools and between schools. It follows that if these consensus systems are adequate, then degrees are not really necessary; peer review is an adequate alternative as a consensus-based method for schools to guard their content standards. In the context of schools functioning as self-critical consensus groups, it is easy to see why Barnett sees peer review as a descriptor of higher education. (1988a:108) Webster mentions an interesting case where a well-known Harvard department had three full professors without Ph.D. degrees at one time; one had a law degree, one a Master of Education, and one a Bachelor of Arts. (1981:22)

Nevertheless, countries do not solve their financial problems by abolishing money. Degrees are a helpful gauge of expertise and schools will continue to use them, although accreditors should recognize their limitations.

# 9
# PROCESS ACCREDITATION

The process model of accreditation looks at what the school does, that is, its processes. By definition, it does not look for direct evidence of learning. It assumes that students learn satisfactorily if the school meets criteria for buildings, library, number of staff, credentials of teaching staff, curriculum, text-books, administration, and totals of study time.

All that presently prevents some nontraditional education from fully adopting many ordinary process accreditation guides is, in essence, proportion of total study time spent in class and rules on campus and library facilities. Adopting process accreditation would enhance credibility in more traditional schools because many accreditors still tend to favor it, even though it is a very weak model.

In defence of its better applications, its worst mistakes are probably more representative of some accreditors than others, and some might exist only in the mind of some accreditees. The model has provided educators with a pool of knowledge of particular delivery systems, and its most useful role is in evaluating institutionality. The more that process criteria take the form of principles the more generally applicable they are. Besides, some of its critics forget that credit programs must account not only for how much time students use but also the way they use it. Although it does not emphasize what students actually learn, it assumes that students are working to capacity during their entire study time. This means that accreditors are entitled to check content and workload by looking at course outlines, assignments, program structure, text-books, assessment procedures, and sometimes even lecture notes. Consequently, this approach can be thorough and can produce solid education.

Nevertheless, process accreditation has very few redeeming features. Speaking of North American nontraditional study, Cross *et al.* list extreme cases where traditional accreditors have specified:

1. That the majority of students must be full-time,
2. That residency is compulsory,
3. Not only the total numbers of study hours, but also how many study hours in separate subjects,
4. Limits on the amount of independent study,
5. Particular foreign languages which are considered always necessary,
6. How many years a program shall take,
7. An exact ratio of staff to students,
8. Exactly how many seats the library must have, how many hours per week it must be open, and what types of shelving it must prefer,
9. That prerequisite undergraduate work be done in residence,
10. That certain subjects, though fully accredited, are not allowable as part of the undergraduate degree,

11. That the majority of staff must be full-time,
12. The architectural harmony of buildings, and
13. The stock and prices in the bookstore. (Cross *et al.*, 1974:162-166)

In a less critical vein, Gollnick and Kunkel report one study of a mainly process-based accreditor. Accreditation standards were too ambiguous to be applied consistently, and they did not really relate to quality. Costs were excessive. By dividing a program into categories, accreditation "masked" the health of the whole. Accreditors could not show how they prioritized different standards in making decisions, and the process disfavored some kinds of institutions. (1986:310, based on AACTE, 1983)

The list of weaknesses of process accreditation below is not at all comprehensive and somewhat overlaps with those above.

First, process accreditation does not directly guarantee that students learn anything. Travelling a long and hard journey does not in itself guarantee arriving at the destination. At its very best, it monitors teaching rather than evaluates learning. At its worst, the accreditation process is an exchange of pieces of paper between the school's bureaucrats and the accreditor's bureaucrats, with no reference to what really happens to students. It readily accepts a structural view of quality that is unconcerned with what students learn. As an equally bad extreme, it is susceptible to metricism; process accreditors can simply dictate a list of statistics.[10] A school which has enough of everything according to the predetermined criteria is deemed to be a good school.

Second, standards are too often irrelevant to the programs for which they are intended. (Ferris, 1984:2) Consequently, nontraditional programs not only attract criticism as being of poor quality, but they get no helpful input on how to improve. Even worse, low-quality nontraditional programs can justify themselves by pointing to the unsuitability of criteria.

Third, accreditors can impose colonial patterns on non-Western countries by regulating educational processes. They can make educational systems increasingly dependent on the West for literature and staff training. (Ferris, 1984:2) This is not all bad. The higher education system in most non-Western countries is largely modelled on the European or American concept of the university, and the prominence of some kinds of knowledge in Western universities makes them attractive to non-Westerners. However, regulation of processes is hardly the best way to improve non-Western education; it contributes more to the empty typewriter syndrome.

Fourth, process accreditation is inflexible; it assumes that all good schools are essentially the same and that unique features in a school are aberrations. It only maps a very limited variety of paths for getting to the destination; where it has worked, it has depended on all schools being very similar. It can evaluate neither innovations nor programs which want to get to the same destination by a very different road. It is hard to see it being useful in a highly stratified, culturally pluralistic society. Parry has argued that having uniform standards is logically inconsistent with divers curricula (1970:69), which is true if it refers to process standards. For example, a criterion asking for six thousand usable titles in a library tries to ensure that students have adequate resources of complex information. A nontraditional school reaches the same

10 Gulleson's book (1986) on evaluating TEE programs is so steeped in metric process criteria that it did not help in the present study.

goal if students develop the same type of knowledge through alternative means, whether by using library books, texts, or field research. (*Cf.* ATA, 1987:4-6)

Fifth, it uses the "rule of thumb" method of formulating criteria. It is difficult to generalize, but some process accreditation guides give the impression that they were written by a committee of subject matter experts unversed in program evaluation. Consequently, the approach springs leaks because schools try to circumvent accreditation rules. Some accreditation guides are complex or trivial because they are no more than long lists of plugs designed for a remarkably wide range of leaks. It is always possible to plug leaks with more "rules of thumb," but the inherently flawed approach so easily springs more of them. It does not help matters that members of accreditation evaluation teams informally make up more rules to plug leaks. These are some common leaks:

1. Staff can schedule nonexistent classes to keep administrators and accreditors happy. They might or might not make up the study load in other ways.
2. When students are not working, schools can raise the number of required hours in a semester hour, or the number of semester hours in a degree, or simply change the meaning of the degree.
3. Schools can ignore students' non-assigned personal study (normally one-third of the total time for a semester hour), by not even providing it or by not having to account for its usage.
4. Schools can fill up student time with "busywork," that is, unproductive activities that keep students busy without helping them to learn.
5. Accredited schools can set up branches with little or no library holdings, but which remain accredited as library-dependent programs because of a large, totally inaccessible library at a distant center. (Some accreditors have regulated on extension programs seeking "piggyback accreditation." See AABC, 1976, 1982:69, 1986; ATS, 1986:119)
6. Large libraries do not necessarily facilitate resource usage. Libraries can lack major standard reference works and original source material such as monographs and theses, and then compensate by "padding" the total of volumes. They can stock many copies of each book, keep many titles which are outdated, non-essential, or unrelated to the study program, or keep books in languages that students cannot read. Reading hours can be too short to meet student needs, and understaffed services can still satisfy accreditation requirements by including bureaucrats in library staff figures.
7. Big schools with expensive programs are not necessarily economically efficient. Some maintain expensive bureaucracies or own large facilities mainly to acquire prestige. (This problem is more prevalent is some non-Western countries.) By riding on their reputations, big schools can sometimes cut academic corners, when smaller schools cutting the same corners would lose all their credibility.

Sixth, process accreditation can suffer from legalism. Process standards are phrased like sets of rules to which schools must conform; legalists assume that law-keeping produces quality. Too preoccupied with processes to see deeper issues and regarding law-breakers as an inferior breed, legalists look at unaccredited schools with dismay, regardless of how good their programs are.

Brennan relates that accreditors can give the impression of being academic policemen who have the job of finding faults and denying status, respect, and recognition. At the same time they threaten accreditees' institutional autonomy. (1986:155) Similarly, Browne reports that some accreditors can see their job as finding schools which are "not good enough". (1984:49)

Seventh, some accreditors have at times too closely controlled curriculum specifics. This shuts the door on creativity and sometimes even prevents particular schools from adapting their programs to better reach their objectives. Some schools must even choose between becoming accredited and fulfilling their institutional mission. Curriculum control is especially dangerous in an international accreditor where schools obviously have very different needs. Basic disciplinary content is clearly necessary, but process accreditation is not the best way to ensure it. Accreditors can easily cause ill-feeling if they stipulate almost the entire curriculum (and semester hour ratings for each subject) for all schools in a region, and refuse accreditation to those who disobey.

Eighthly, process accreditors can use restrictive access rules to discourage schools from reaching their target populations. Their motives are sometimes elitist, which is wrong in some cases. (Ferris, 1984:3) In other cases, they can easily limit access by forcing on-campus residence (sometimes restricting this to single students only), refusing advanced standing even when appropriate, discouraging curriculum adaption for mature-age students, and prohibiting graduates of low-level programs from continuing to degree level. They can also prohibit conditional or special entry for mature-age students who have proven capable of studying, but who never had the chance many years ago to complete the now-required formal education prerequisites. In extreme cases, accreditors unashamedly prevent the education of those who would most benefit from it.

In conclusion, the process model has hardly anything to offer; others promise much more.

# 10
# PRODUCT ACCREDITATION

The product approach to accreditation is like the means-ends curriculum model and uses a product view of quality. As a view of accreditation, it is far less developed than the literature on the product view of curriculum and teaching. After process accreditation, product accreditation was a major breakthrough. By using internal consistency and fitness-for-purpose criteria, it could dispose of uniform processes while expecting concrete evidence of student learning. It meant that the same criteria could equally suit both traditional and very nontraditional programs. (*Cf.* Andrews, 1983:347)

Briefly put, it is as follows. The school starts by defining its distinctive mission. It then defines each degree by specifying its program objectives, saying exactly what it expects of its graduates. The school must then plot the best path (represented by the objectives of each subject) to producing the product, and systematically evaluate what it does to show that it is actually doing so. The accreditor checks whether smaller objectives actually support the broader objectives, whether students are thus meeting the objectives, and whether the product is like a particular degree. (See Mostert, 1973 and Young ed.:1983) The product approach is still interested in checking delivery systems, but it sees them as a means to an end rather than as ends in themselves. As the accreditor prescribes a finite number of logically-derived criteria, it tends to be epistemologically hard.

Below are some of the most important program elements that need to be consistent. It is interesting that delivery systems, buildings, and library resources are dependant variables with comparatively peripheral roles. The arrangement is much like an algorithm.

*Institutional objectives*, sometimes called "statement of mission" should reflect the school's distinctives. They determine program objectives, including the definition and classification of specific product, and the degree meaning. (Even if the accreditor's goals are unclear, the approach assumes that the institutional objectives of the school are compatible with them.)

*Program objectives* in turn determine many things, especially the subject objectives. Others include the constraints put upon the information to be taught, the target groups of potential students and program entry requirements, recruiting procedures, administrative support systems, whether or not the program will be divided into credits, and if so, the way it will be done.

*Subject objectives* (especially if stated as products) determine the time and subject expertise required of teaching staff, teaching strategies, evaluation methods, and delivery systems. The latter in turn determines what physical facilities and information resources (*e.g.*, library) will be necessary.

As an example of product accreditation, a hypothetical Asian denomination sets up a theological school to Bachelor level specifically to train pastors for its churches. It might be

called Biblical School of Theology (BST). It had no applied subjects but was strong on nineteenth century European theology and the lexicography of biblical languages. After all coursework requirements, students did a four-week practicum and wrote a thirty thousand word thesis.

Evaluation, however, found BST to be inconsistent. The school aimed to produce Asian pastors, but its subjects and culminating product evaluation simply did not fit. It was producing European academics. An internal consistency criterion between goals and products would mean that such a school would not be accredited.

The pastors in the denomination of the equally hypothetical Scriptural Theological Seminary (STS) asked for a flexible, academic program so that they could further their education. Most had Diplomas in Theology which already included full ministerial training. The seminary decided upon a Bachelor program which focussed on research with only a minimum of coursework. If students wished (not many did), they could take electives in nineteenth century European theology and the lexicography of biblical languages. Most of the program was spent in writing a major thesis, which constituted the product. Despite being much like BST, the STS program held together and could well have become accredited.

Another variation of product accreditation is contract accreditation, developed by the National Association of Private, Nontraditional Schools and Colleges, an unrecognized but sincere American accreditor. In this variation, accreditation is a contract between the accreditor and the accreditee about what the accreditee will do. (1982:11, 108) Its most interesting aspect is its orientation toward the future rather than the past accomplishments of the school. The school must show that it has the means and the will to produce a quality program in the immediate future, defining it in product terms using specific objectives. The accreditor can then contract with the school to accredit it on the basis that the school will carry out the program according to the contract. This is similar to the formative idea that accreditors should require schools to use their self-evaluation results to improve demonstrably.

The orientation to the future, however, is not universally good. Well-defined plans are not the same as what will happen. Feedback from past performance helps a program to understand accurately what it is really like and how it developed. The "what it's really like" picture is a good argument for accreditors to accredit only programs that have been running for a while.

**Weaknesses and Strengths**

The product model of accreditation has several weaknesses besides those already associated with a product view of quality, not least of which is its conception of objectives and its dependence on internal consistency.

Although it is possible to write good program and institutional objectives, they tend to be too vague to determine program components. In any case, it is worth asking whether most people in a program know its goals and whether they have discussed them enough to understand them similarly. (*Cf.* Rutherford, 1987b:94f) Besides, means easily degenerate into ends in themselves. (Barnett, 1988a:102)

Nevertheless, the advantages and central values of the product approach are well worth maintaining. It is hard to deny that programs should be justifiable or that teachers should be accountable to reach relevant goals. It is difficult to dispose of the central values of purposefulness, fitness for purpose, consistency, and articulation of aims. There is more progress to be made in retaining them than in abandoning them. Perhaps the real issue is not whether they are valid, but that they are not valid in isolation.

The product model of accreditation is not prejudiced against schools that are small, nontraditional, or relatively new. It provides a role for criteria and, although it gives little guidance to ensure that people in a school will interpret goals similarly, at least it gives some help in formulating goals. It is open to program feedback, and relegates delivery systems and facilities to their correct role.

The emphasis on the future is a positive development, and avoids the impression that established programs can rest on their laurels. An earlier chapter has already mentioned the notion that evaluation should oblige schools to improve. Past performance alone is an inadequate basis to extend accredited status; it should depend on real progress in weak areas. (See also Hagerty and Stark, 1989, esp. pp. 17f)

**Practical Pointers: Means-ends Criteria**

A means-ends consistency is a means-ends relationship between two elements in a program, with the end as an independent variable and the means as a dependent variable. The end might show to what extent the means is necessary and adequate or what its attributes should be. In this sense, poor quality is inconsistency and unfitness for purpose. Translating most criteria from processes into consistencies is quite easy, and it is just as easy to create an indefinite number of them, even if not all are useful.

The idea of consistencies suggests that the core of a program is its goals, although they are actually too narrow to be accurate representations of the whole of a program. Nevertheless, consistencies have the advantage of being less concerned with boundaries and of needing fewer prescribed criteria than process accreditation. Unlike process accreditation, it does not need to plug up all sorts of leaks with rules of thumb.

On the other hand, it is a logical basis to multiply criteria easily and fairly to suit real situations where almost anything can go wrong, or where people can complain about almost any dysfunctionality. (That is, it can still relate to potentially infinitely many particulars.) Consider the following examples of consistencies:

1. The goals of a degree program must be consistent with the goals of its school.
2. Program structure and content must be consistent with program objectives. (Assuming program objectives are consistent with each other, this is just another way of saying that a degree program must deal with a unitary field of knowledge, even if it is interdisciplinary.)
3. The types of knowledge taught must be consistent with program goals. For example, a graduate from a professional degree program needs both appropriate attitudes and the ability to handle complex information.
4. The expertise of teaching staff must be reasonably consistent with the content of the subjects they teach.
5. Administration systems must be consistent with the type and size of program.
6. The facilities must be consistent with the size of the student population.

However, some consistencies are better expressed as if/then statements. For example, assessment schools do not teach, so criteria relating to teaching do not apply to them. For example:

7. If the school teaches, then its delivery system must be consistent with the kind of degree. (As a result, a school with poor teaching and good evaluation cannot then become accredited as an assessment program.)
8. If the school teaches, then teaching must be consistent with both the abilities of the students and evaluation. Consequently, schools often adjust their standards according to their

students' abilities. They can use students' average ability as a guide (norm-referenced evaluation), or they can change objectives if they use criterion-referencing.

9. Information resources (for example, library resources) should be consistent with teaching-learning strategies.

Others are more than simple criteria because they cloak assumptions. For example, admissions policies must be consistent with program goals. Bowen has pointed out that admission procedures are related to product; the students admitted to the program must have the potential to reach program goals (1970:64) with the amount of instruction that the school will provide. Even in schools with an open access policy, applicants must pass a trial period before full acceptance.

# 11
# INTERPERSONAL MODELS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

Some models of program evaluation are based on the roles of interest groups and consensus. Some assume that one particular kind of interest group should do the evaluation because it knows better than the others. Some give all interest groups a role in the evaluation because they assume that no particular group should control the process. A couple even assume that the primary qualification of an evaluator is that he must not be a member of an interest group. Still others are more interested in the appropriate kinds of interaction between groups.

These models tend to see school communities as consisting of various groups with different or competing interests. These groups are unlikely to act against what they see as their own interests, but the issue is not just competing forms of selfishness. Different interest groups bring different kinds of knowledge to an evaluation, either special areas of expertise or knowledge available only to people with a particular perspective and experience of the program.

Although these types of evaluation appear methodologically different, they lend compatible insights to program evaluation suitable for accreditation.

Interpersonal styles of evaluation are epistemologically very soft. They depend on interaction between people, and unashamedly use biased personal opinions as their basic material. Different models tend to presume different primary audiences (House, 1983:48), although the need to differentiate between audiences is sometimes more apparent than real.

**Non-expert Evaluation**

Flexner held that accreditation was best done by non-experts, average laypeople with a little common sense, using simple process evaluation. He did not want to belong to an interest group; he felt that experts blindly accept questionable practices, are unwilling to criticize, and have professional relationships to protect. (Floden, 1983:267, 272) While nobody suggests that his evaluation methods are still adequate, his comments on vested interests are still relevant.

**Goal-free Evaluation**

Goal-free evaluation focusses on the consumer as the interest group. In the original form of the model, Scriven held that an evaluator becomes biased when he knows a program's goals because he interprets his observations according to program goals. Almost by definition, the evaluator could not be someone in the program who knew its objectives. Considered an extremist view at its inception, goal-free evaluation was a necessary counterbalance in an era dominated by means-ends thinking and product evaluation.

The evaluator observes what happens in the program to find actual product and effects. Rather than asking about the goals of the program, he must infer the actual goals from his ob-

servations. He might also be able to infer the reasons why the program exists and why it uses the approaches it does. The evaluator's inferences should resemble those which were formulated if the program reality matches the formulation and suits its consumers. Scriven did not present a clear methodology, but the basic steps seem to be:

1. identify the program,
2. observe the processes,
3. question participants on what they are doing (but not why),
4. find out their personal responses to the program,
5. infer real effects and actual goals, and
6. prepare a report for use in a product evaluation.

This model has its problems. It either lacks a value-base for the evaluator to draw conclusions, or uses only that of the consumer. That is, it is biased in favor of one interest group, even if it portrays the program accurately from that vantage point. It also relies heavily on inductive logic and the evaluator's ability to interpret his observations. Besides, it cannot replace product evaluation although it is an appropriate compliment. (See also Meyers, 1981:122ff)

On the other hand, its central assumption and chief advantage is that intended and actual products can differ greatly. What a program is really doing and achieving might be very different from its written goals. It responds to side-effects, which is especially important as they can be more important and real than intended products. Product evaluators are less well positioned to even find them, let alone judge their importance or evaluate them. Goal-free evaluation is a consumer's kind of evaluation because it looks at the product the consumer gets, giving an undeniably important viewpoint. In this sense, the product view is producer-centered because producers can specify goals to try to limit their liability to their consumers. (See Scriven, 1974; Browne, 1984:49 also differentiates between "blueprint" and "product.")

It is hard to say the goal-free evaluation is basically flawed; it is more accurate to say that it is inherently limited and unable to serve as a true whole-of-program evaluation.

**Peer or Expert Evaluation**

In this view, the team of expert or peer reviewers is the group which must come to a consensus. Barnett mentions the major role of peer review in the Britain's CNAA (1987:279) and even suggests that it is a defining element of higher education. (1988a:108) This is actually a kind of interschool consensus group except that the kind of relationship is quite different as it reflects the accreditor's power.

Peer evaluation is the most common form of accreditation evaluation and the literature frequently mentions it. Peer reviewers are usually staff members of other schools which are already accredited, and whether true or not, are presumed to be subject matter experts. Ferris also mentions "accreditation by the expert" as a separate model (1986:4), meaning that accreditation is the business of only a few people whose expertise everybody else should trust. Eisner articulated it as a form of qualitative program evaluation, calling it the connoisseurship model. (See Eisner, 1983; Guba and Lincoln, 1982:18f) These kinds are considered together here because they have much in common.

Expert evaluation has several important strengths. Experts attempt to face what they believe are the most important issues in their field. To disregard their expertise is to prefer ignorance. Subject matter experts also protect legitimate interests in disciplinary or professional content, the importance of which is hard to underestimate. Despite the approach"s weaknesses, it has at least promoted high content standards.

*The issue of tacit knowledge.* Sadler makes a useful critique of expert (tacit) knowledge. Expert knowledge is not clearly articulated in such a way as to be accessible to laymen or even students, but if experts substantially agree, then the knowledge must exist. He lists four weaknesses: first, its mystique makes students dependent on their teachers, and second, experts can seriously disagree (also Ferris 1986:4) and when they do, their standards appear arbitrary. Third, evaluation systems using tacit knowledge are very labor-intensive, and fourth, consensus can depend more on group dynamics than on justified application of standards.

Sadler also points out strengths. Tacit knowledge is better when a small number of criteria is inadequate and a comprehensive list is too long to be workable. It is also better when many exceptions to the standards may be made under certain conditions. (1987:199f)

At worst, experts can too easily become technocrats. "Expertise" seriously threatens accreditation when it becomes the secret knowledge of an elite, being neither explicit nor open to evaluation. Even proving that such knowledge exists in a particular case can be difficult and time-consuming. In a real evaluation, the accreditor assumes that members of the evaluation really have such knowledge. There is no way, however, to differentiate between the use of real, tacit knowledge and subjective judgments, which are highly unreliable. (*Cf. e.g.*, Sadler, 1987:194) That is, one cannot know if the evaluation even uses tacit knowledge unless the evaluation team dedicates considerable time and effort to communicating the rationale for their conclusions.

Where it does exist, it uses a consensus view of quality. It does not necessarily support the ineffable view because, in any one case, it is possible for experts to explain their criteria and the reasons for them. There is no shortage of effability; criteria can be reconceptualized and re-expressed in indefinitely many ways.

*Weaknesses.* Besides those relating to tacit knowledge, the approach as a whole is fraught with problems of many kinds:

1. Experts can easily impose incompatible values on the evaluee.
2. Experts cannot easily observe the role of values in an institution. (Ferris, 1986:4)
3. Self-studies done by elites and for elites do not involve others. They hardly encourage others to use them to improve programs, except perhaps by technocratic or bureaucratic decision.
4. There is some evidence that it fails to give good insight of specific programs (Kalkwijk, 1991).
5. In Dressel's opinion, expert reviews have tended to be broad generalizations made quickly with minimal data, and overly influenced by political and value considerations. (1976:4)
6. Peer reviewers easily become preoccupied with processes. This is a particular problem in many kinds of nontraditional education where processes are very different from ordinary campuses. Especially in cases of nontraditional education, peer reviewers should come from programs similar enough for them to be able to make useful, unprejudiced statements.
7. It does not pass the interest group test. On one hand, issues of functionality lay outside the interests protected by content experts. They are rightly concerned with the body of knowledge which students must know, but not necessarily whether it is communicated well to students or whether programs are well-run. Like gate-keepers of professional guilds (*cf.* Sadler, 1987:199), experts can succumb to the private club mentality. Reviewers are by definition biased in favor of one set of particular interests, which they can most effectively protect by withholding a recommendation favorable to the school.

8. There are many different kinds of experts. To claim that expertise alone is an adequate basis for evaluation conclusions, a team would need enough experts in each relevant area to come to some sort of consensus based on a body of responsible opinion. It would also need to ensure each team member did not get over-involved outside their own particular area of ability. This hardly appears likely, especially given the many different kinds of relevant expertise. A subject matter expert is an authority in a particular content area. Others know more about program administration and are better qualified to give advice on administrational efficiency. Other expert groups are educators and program evaluators, which have seldom played a role in accreditation. Academics differ from practicing professionals and it is unwise to presume that they always accept each other's opinions. For example, rather than eclectisize several theories, academics tend to construct single theories, which individually may be inadequate for practice. Basic research often questions (and sometimes disproves) the working assumptions of professionals.

*Conclusion*. It is impossible for accreditors to develop pools of expertise in all relevant fields, and schools can take responsibility for getting consultant help where necessary. However, review by content experts is indispensable in protecting the issues of content, and it has a good track record doing so. Nevertheless, it cannot stand alone as an adequate model; it favors a particular interest group yet has no built-in checks and balances.

**Interactive Evaluation: Stake, Cronbach**

Stake (1967) proposed the countenance model with its thirteen categories of information. It seems a little too complex to be suited to accreditation, but Plueddemann (1987:59) summarized it in six leading questions:

1. What context was assumed during planning?
2. What learning activities were intended?
3. What outcomes were intended?
4. What was the actual context of the program?
5. What learning activities were actually used?
6. What were the actual outcomes?

This model had several strengths. It differentiated between what was intended and what actually happened, which implied a feedback evaluation of program goals. It looked at both processes and outcomes. Its original form included places for information on the rationale of the program, and for standards and judgments.

According to Stufflebeam (1983:122), Stake eventually incorporated the countenance model into the responsive model, where evaluators could use it as an advance organizer to plan the evaluation. (Stake, 1983:295)

In responsive evaluation, the evaluator is part of the evaluation process, not a disinterested and remote separate party. The evaluation emerges from the way people respond to each other. Stake suggested twelve activities, summarized in the following seven points:

1. Observe the program and draw conclusions about its scope and processes,
2. Talk with program participants,
3. Locate and conceptualize emerging issues,
4. Discover purposes and concerns,
5. Prepare portrayals,
6. Select observers, judges and instruments, and
7. Assemble reports. (1983:297f)

A strength of the model is that these activities can occur in almost any order (p. 297); one lesson from curriculum studies is that people do not follow a neat set of steps in exact order (*cf.* Brady's view of interactive curriculum 1983:64ff). It is impossible when handling two steps simultaneously in relationship to each other, and it is always necessary to think ahead to future steps, then later re-check and revise what was done. (See also Ferris, 1986:4f) However, the lack of a clear procedure is also a weakness waiting to ensnare the inexperienced evaluator. A step-by-step procedure helps the evaluator conceptualize what he is trying to achieve and why, and shows where to start and how to do it. Some ordering is obligatory; an evaluator could hardly start by writing the final report. The truth is more likely that ordering is necessary but cannot be rigid. Interactive evaluation is much like the realities of what happens in product accreditation, and the relationship between the "steps" is much like most other models.

Cronbach presents a similarly interactive approach to evaluation. Unlike Stake, however, he suggests that the interactive aspect of evaluation is unavoidable, whatever model one uses. For example, evaluations depend greatly on people with political power for support, acceptance, and implementation. (1980:6) Similarly, he suggests that an evaluator has political power even if he does not want it. (1980:3) Evaluators play important roles in linking people together, suggesting evaluation models, establishing criteria, and implying success or failure; consequently, program participants attempt to do that which will be considered successful.

Like the consensus view of quality, the interactive model not only depends on interaction between people, it describes some dynamics that will happen anyway. Cronbach suggests it is better to make multiple evaluations of programs using various models than trust everything to one evaluation (1980:7), decreasing the expectations thrust upon any one evaluator.

As an approach to accreditation, it inherits the strengths of the countenance framework. That it is so dynamic without a more definite procedure, however, means that an evaluator needs considerable expertise and time to produce a suitable report. Stake saw "risks" in the approach, saying that it overly relied on subjective perceptions and that it ignored causes (1983:304), results of his naturalistic presuppositions. It is difficult to see how it could work if the evaluator was either part of the school or the accreditation agency. It is also best suited to providing descriptive and formative data, and gives little expectation of summative results.

**Stakeholder Evaluation**

An obvious way to evaluate a program is simply to ask the people in it what they think. The evaluator can get many opinions on its problems and many ideas on how to improve it, although the technique is more difficult than that. In this view, the consensus group includes all the school's interest groups: students, teachers, experts, administrators, funders, employer groups, representatives of practicing professionals, and graduates, in fact anybody who "holds a stake" in the success of the institution. (Solmon, 1981:13; Brenninkmeijer *et al.*, 1985; House, 1982:10, 11; HEC, 1992:5. See also Perry [1976:204] for a discussion of stakeholderism in administration.) The TEE movement has emphasized its relationship to the church, which becomes a significant stakeholder in most TEE schools. The church is a stakeholder in the same way that industry is a stakeholder in technological and technical education.

Many stakeholder groups, most notably students, are not permanent administrative units in the school. By involving everyone, stakeholder evaluations differ from ordinary accreditation self-studies, which are done primarily by small groups of influential people.

Stakeholders have differing kinds of interests. For example, most students want a fair system with an efficient, cooperative administration. They want to be satisfied with teaching,

and they want a credible degree which will open doors to careers and to further education. Staff want career development and a sense of academic or professional achievement. Employers are mainly interested in getting competent employees. Stakeholders also have different levels of interest. An employer group might be able to attract graduates from other schools, but full-time staff might think of what they will do all day in the long-term future. (*Cf.* also Harris, 1990:41)

A good stakeholder evaluation encourages openness, honesty, and willingness to solve problems. Each group can raise issues from their unique perspectives, presumably counterbalancing each other in the way they interact to protect their partisan interests. Stakeholders have good reasons to work together if they want to become accredited and believe that they are ready for it. Using multiple perspectives naturally leads to the use of various tools. (Furnham has noted that one tends to think of everything as a nail if one's only tool is a hammer. [1990:109])

Stakeholderism makes several assumptions. As each school is presumably unique, stakeholderism uses an internal consistency criterion, although some stakeholders might want to copy other schools. Using their different views of the program as starting points, stakeholder groups seek consensus on appropriate ways to improve their program. Consequently, negotiation plays a prominent role in finding emergent truth about the program. It is almost true to say that stakeholders must negotiate their own accreditation with each other, and the negotiation aspect of curriculum becomes very illuminative.

Consensus refers to stated acceptance by appointed stakeholder representatives of a given proposal in a meeting, in such a way they all become willing to act upon it. It does not necessarily apply only to personal belief, because it is the result of the buffeting of negotiation and compromise.

By avoiding questions that predetermine answers, the evaluator does not decide what is good education. He is a facilitator whose questions help stakeholders to articulate their thoughts and observations.

**The Steps in Stakeholder Evaluation**

The versions of stakeholderism differ in mostly small ways. Unlike other versions suited a wider range of applications, Ferris adds more formalized steps appropriate to an accreditation evaluation. This largely answers questions on what is to be evaluated and why--a school is being evaluated for accreditation. It also makes the process more concrete and suited for untrained evaluators, being somewhat simpler and with fewer steps. In contrast, Guba and Lincoln add steps so that each stakeholder group can resolve some issues internally before dealing with other stakeholder groups.

When Ferris applied stakeholderism to accreditation, it was only one part of the process, the self-study. The accreditor then checked the credibility (integrity) of the self-study. That is, the accreditor not only sets a procedure for the self-study but the visiting accreditation team checks it afterward. The accreditor retains some leverage to avoid abuse, so that stakeholders cannot simply vote themselves accredited.

The following is a combination of Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Ferris (1986), with several additions from JCSEE (1981):

1. The school contacts the accreditor.
2. The school then appoints a two-member team to direct the evaluation.
3. The team identifies stakeholders and explains the full evaluation procedure.

4. The team choose stakeholder representatives who form a stakeholder committee.
5. The team helps each stakeholder group as follows:
   a. Each group interprets its role in the school.
   b. Each group identifies concerns and issues that they feel need to be resolved if the school is to improve.
   c. Each group locates new information and better ways to process it, so that it can better understand the school from its perspective. This should resolve some issues.
   d. Each group reviews the results of other stakeholder groups' discussions, which should also resolve some issues.
6. The team holds a stakeholder committee meeting and
   a. clarifies the purpose of the school,
   b. describes how it operates,
   c. identifies factors influencing the development of the school,
   d. discusses evidence on the effectiveness of the school,
   e. sorts out which issues have already been resolved,\ prioritizes unresolved issues,
   f. determines what information will be necessary to resolve them, and
   g. delegates information collection.

The results of points a, b, and c comprise the basis of a statement on program characteristics.

7. Delegated people collect information on unresolved issues.
8. Meanwhile, the evaluation team evaluates the school using the criteria provided by the accreditor. It also prepares a report on "integrity," that is, the credibility of the evaluation before the accreditor. This comprises a justification of the degree levels and a description of how the evaluation was done, including problems encountered and the teams' solutions.
9. The evaluation team prepares an agenda for negotiation.
10. The stakeholder committee meets and
    a. negotiates solutions,
    b. identifies unresolved issues,
    c. compiles a full self-study report (which also suggests program improvements), and
    d. comes to agreement on the report, revising it as necessary.
11. The school informs the accreditor that it is ready for the accreditor's visiting team and encloses copies of the report.
12. The accreditor's team study the report before the visit.
13. The visiting team from the accreditor checks that the school adhered to the procedure responsibly, verifies the level of the degrees awarded, and establishes that the school meets the accreditor's criteria. It also checks that the study of special program characteristics is adequate but may not question its results.

The visiting team reports back to the accreditor, which may grant accredited status on the school. During the later stages of the process, the final report is also distributed to all stakeholder groups and a summary is made public.

The sources omitted to say that each group should review progress on program improvements since the last review, and that the school should implement the suggestions for school improvement.

**Alleged Weaknesses in Stakeholderism: Weiss's Critique**

Weiss's criticism of stakeholderism has some good points (below), but much of it is a little unfair. It was based on an evaluation that stood little chance of success--an evaluation of

a government program where the government wanted to diffuse responsibility for the evaluation. The program involved political factors, complex funding, and various social groupings. Its sheer size and geographical spread were unfavorable to a good evaluation, and it was highly ambiguous, with activities varying greatly from day to day and from place to place. The evaluation also asked stakeholders to prespecify their information needs as if they were performing a quantitative evaluation. (1986b:191)

Weiss's case did not use functional units, and stakeholder evaluation was perhaps unsuitable to evaluate the whole of such a large and complex program anyway. Cronbach (1980:7) advises that no single evaluation could be adequate, regardless of its kind. Stakeholders were naturally harder to identify (1986a:151) and could only be further from the evaluation process. In a government program, political factors play a very significant role in decision-making, even if the public will likely accept the evaluation's findings. (1986b:192f)

She also counts it a weakness of stakeholder evaluation that evaluators cannot specify information needs in advance. (1986b:190f) In fact, however, this applies to all kinds of qualitative evaluation; truth about a program is emergent and the main issues emerge only during the evaluation.

Other supposed weaknesses are no more than limitations. For example, she says that the evaluation still needed knowledge of products (1986a:153), which fell outside the scope of the evaluation. There is nothing in the stakeholder model to say that evaluators should not study products or do empirical studies, as long as they do not replace qualitative information.

**Causes for Concern in Stakeholderism**

Stakeholderism cannot comprise the entire accreditation evaluation. The accreditor's visiting team need to review the integrity of the self-study and check whether the school has adequately functioning mechanisms to maintain content standards. However, this is a limitation rather than a weakness. Other limitations are internal consistency and necessary inconsistencies, discussed later in this chapter. Besides, stakeholderism has more than a few potential real weaknesses:

*Who is the evaluator?* The evaluation literature assumes that the evaluator is a specialized professional. In accreditation, however, it is a little more ambiguous. The evaluator would more likely be chosen from the school's staff (as Ferris suggested), or from the accreditor's staff.

*Evaluator pressures.* The process puts unreasonable pressures on evaluators. The evaluator too easily becomes a clearing-house, liaison between stakeholders, and supposedly value-free font of wisdom. (Weiss, 1986a:153) He must be unwilling to use his position to protect his own interests, especially as he might become an arbiter or power-broker. It is questionable whether Guba and Lincoln's proposal helps (1989:246f); they suggested good rules of negotiation which seem a little too idealistic to cope with many cases of natural inequities.

*Inequities*. Stakeholderism faces natural inequities because stakeholders do not have equal power, information, or negotiating skills.

Power structures are a problem because stakeholderism presupposes that all stakeholders have a right to contribute to the evaluation. In a more hierarchical society, powerful stakeholders can nearly dictate consensus, and strong personalities and skilful negotiators sometimes jostle for influence and power. In many societies, deans and rectors naturally negotiate

from a position of power and status, while students have comparatively little voice. Stakeholderism offers no solutions for such problems.

Similarly, stakeholder groups are not equally well-informed about the business of the school, nor will they be equally close to the evaluation process. Students and junior staff can only comment on their particular experiences; they have limited viewpoints and lack the power that comes from having more complete information about the program.

Guba and Lincoln emphasize the empowering of weaker stakeholder groups to make the process fairer. (1989:246) Alternatively, some inequities might be justifiable when some stakeholders have much more at risk than others. Some might have their careers at stake, while a professional association can easily ignore a small school. It might be fairer to give some stakeholders more rights than others.

*Who decides about stakeholders?* Weiss points out that the approach does not have a way to clarify who should make decisions about who is a stakeholder. (1986a:152) Although most stakeholder groups are easy to define, some are rather borderline. In a program that trains professionals, consumers and potential consumers of professional services might have important opinions on the program.

*Who protects the accreditor's interests?* Evaluator agencies can use stakeholderism to diffuse responsibility and reduce vulnerability. (Weiss, 1986a:154) With a pattern of devolved authority, it becomes unclear who is protecting the interests of the accreditor.

Some parties can have a stake in the evaluation without having a stake in the school. The accreditor and other schools in the association also have quite justifiable interests to protect if they accept degrees and transfer credits from accredited schools. They also want to protect the credibility of the accreditor, especially if professional licensing is at stake.

It does not make much sense to extend the stakeholder concept one step further. Other schools cannot protect their interests by evaluating the evaluee school's internal evaluation, because the evaluee uses criteria generated internally through its stakeholders. A stakeholder evaluation may be good for the evaluee but it does little to ensure that a program is accreditable.

In any case, if outside groups (such as other schools or the accreditor) have a stake in the evaluation, then consistency becomes partly external.

*Diffused responsibility*. Like evaluator agencies, schools can also face problems of devolved authority. Despite variance between organizations and cultures, the increasing power of stakeholder groups at some point becomes administrative irresponsibility. The democratic ideal may be admirable, but not a chaotic imbalance of power where administrators can no longer carry their responsibilities.

*Unhelpful expectations*. Stakeholderism assumes that stakeholders have high expectations. Actually, however, both teachers and students can have very low expectations, especially if they have only ever known empty typewriter education and dysfunctional administration. It is almost as likely that stakeholders will be too idealistic and become disappointed with the evaluation.

*Too much information*. Scriven adds that bringing more people into an evaluation can simply make a problem more complicated, and perhaps unsolvable. (1986:64) For example, stakeholders can unnecessarily manufacture problems and opinions. Even if the input is very good,

there can be too much to be all used. Stufflebeam, however, suggested that this was not such a bad problem if it remained in tension with the search for pertinent information. (1983:123) It also parallels the tension between models of evaluation; an accurate model produces such large amounts of information that it risks becoming unmanageable or irrelevant. (*Cf.* Stufflebeam, 1983:123) The opposite tendency is to limit information to keep it manageable, at the risk of simplistic, surrogate measures that bring their own kinds of inaccuracies.

*Bias*. Stakeholderism is inherently biased. Stakeholders cannot make etic observations, as mentioned by Scriven in value-free evaluation (1974; *cf.* also Guba and Lincoln, 1989:210). Then again, it is impractical to expect the accreditor's visiting team to make them either, even if for no other reason that it would require too large a time commitment.

By definition, all stakeholders hold a stake in the school, so they have interests in common which they seek to protect. In the case of accreditation, they all share an interest in getting an accredited status for their school. That is, they can have ulterior motives for reaching a consensus. (*Cf.* Kogan, 1986:133) Consequently, stakeholder consensus does not guarantee that a school is good. Schools naturally try to pretend they are good and rationalize their programs likewise. (Ramsey, 1978:214; Kogan, 1986:137) It has yet to be shown that people will not hide sensitive problems, especially in cultures which are afraid of losing face. Not only that, there is no basis for assuming that all stakeholders have compatible and valid views of quality; they can have common views of a degree mill philosophy or can simply know too little about education. They do not necessarily subscribe to principles higher than their own idiosyncracies.

The cause of the problem is overdependence on internal consistency; stakeholderism needs the counterbalancing effects of external consistency.

*Disagreement*. The alternative problem to agreement through bias in common is that stakeholders do not always agree. It is naive to assume that participation in an evaluation will always motivate people to perform better. (Premfors, 1986:173; Dressel, 1976:384) The evaluation can easily uncover a nest of problems over which stakeholder groups might disagree (*cf.* Weiss, 1986b:191). In some cases, evaluation can also foster unnecessary conflicts, as some types of personalities may perform poorly in evaluation settings, even though they are important to the school. (Premfors, 1986:173) Elsewhere, disagreement can reflect inconsistencies over which the school has little control.

Stakeholders may also disagree with evaluation results after the evaluation; the approach does not ensure that stakeholders will accept its results. Seeing how the study is done can easily disappoint some stakeholders who subsequently become less committed to its results. Some of them can feel threatened when shown to be wrong. (Weiss, 1986b:191f)

Some of these problems are not the exclusive property of stakeholderism. All models of qualitative program evaluation work with fallible people and face the potential problems of inequities, evaluator pressures, unhelpful expectations, disagreement, excessive information, and diffused responsibility. Not only that, the long list of weaknesses tends to be a worst-case scenario. Some are truly substantial but most are only potential; what can happen is not always what will happen.

**Strengths**

Finding strengths in stakeholderism is not very difficult, and the list is quite convincing:

1. Stufflebeam's committee proposed standards for any type of evaluation, but in their opinion, any type of evaluation should include at least an element of stakeholderism. One of

the reasons is ethical; stakeholders are those who have a right to know about the evaluation. (JCSEE, 1981:21, 28, 40, 47, 56, 77)
2. It shares a main strength of Scriven's goal-free evaluation (1974) in eliciting stakeholders' personal responses to the program and inferring real effects and actual goals.
3. It does not claim to create a perfect program. By aiming at improvement, it represents the continually changing dynamics of real programs.
4. Without stakeholder evaluation, schools would still have most of the same problems but they would be less aware of them.
5. In person-oriented cultures, stakeholders are the real starting point in the school anyway, not commitment to an abstract, impersonal statement of institutional mission.
6. By using an internal consistency criterion, stakeholderism avoids unnecessary value conflicts between schools and accreditors, and protects each school's uniqueness.
7. Stakeholders include groups of people that are interested in both functionality and content.
8. There is the potential for beneficial digressions.
9. It provides ways of interpreting abstract criteria.
10. The consensus view of quality enables stakeholder populations to extend beyond the school, thus creating a level of external validity on the issues of content.
11. The ATA view predetermines a procedure. Compared to human services evaluations as a whole, accreditation of schools is a very small category, so accreditors can be more specific in defining procedures which leave less room for ambiguity and improvisation.
12. Stakeholders are well placed to understand the program at least from their own perspective and can see some kinds of problems most clearly. Stakeholders can bring to light many inconsistencies and dysfunctionalities which could not be found using predetermined criteria. For example:
    a. A school with separate campus and extension programs might find that they are inconsistent with each other.
    b. A technological approach assumes that its theoretical and technical aspects are consistent with each other, but an uncomfortable mixture of technical and scientific knowledge can be inconsistent.
    c. Students' immediate interests or felt needs are often inconsistent with the subject matter they really need to learn. (Pring, 1976:48ff)
    d. A degree which signifies real learning might be inconsistent with students' expectations to rote-learn. (*Cf.* Samuelowicz, 1987:123ff; Adam:n.d.)

The internal consistency principle assumes that these will be consistent or can be made consistent, even when the school has no control over them.

**The Awkward Question of Trust**

Program evaluation assumes that highly-trained evaluators will coordinate evaluations; they will not be stakeholders so will be as neutral as possible. Accreditation, however, is different. First, there are two sets of evaluators: those who conduct the school's self-study and those of the accreditor's visiting team. The former clearly represents the interests of the school, but the latter is less clear. Even if visiting accreditation teams get training in evaluation and include professional evaluators, it is unlikely that they will be neutral. They are chosen to represent the accreditor's interests, however defined, and schools can find it difficult to trust them.

Complaints about the lack of trust between accreditors and schools are commonplace in the literature. The issue of legalism, discussed above, weakens relationships between accredi-

tors and accreditees. Furthermore, in Miller's and Barak's survey of undergraduate evaluations, one of the most often-occurring responses was resistance or reluctance from institutions. (1987:27; see also p. 28) Similarly, accreditation too easily falls prey to the personal prejudices of members of its evaluation teams. Cross *et al.* raise the common complaint about prejudiced individual team members, who can undermine the efforts of otherwise open-minded accreditors (1974:159f). Barnett contrasts team chairmen (often fair and openminded) with the "waywardness" of individual members. It does not help that different players can interpret accreditation criteria quite differently. (Barnett, 1987:288, based on Alexander and Wormald, 1983:108 and Billing, 1983:34)

Scriven blames accreditors for selecting evaluation team members who are blind to deep-seated biases. (1983:251f) The problem is not much more than a private club mentality. The team is chosen according to its ability to represent the interests of the accreditor and the other schools, with no assurance that they will protect the interests of the evaluee. It is hard to see how an evaluation team could meet the standards for evaluator credibility, and their situation is readily interpreted as a conflict of interest. (See JCSEE, 1981:24f, 70ff)

A lack of trust also affects formative evaluation for school improvement. Too many schools have not believed accreditors who say that schools should use evaluation results to improve according to the unique characteristics of their schools. Evaluees easily feel that evaluators secretly want to use the evaluation as a tool of judgment, not improvement. Some schools do not trust what accreditors say they want, expecting a hidden agenda of standardization based on processes. They then interpret examples of possible improvements as rigid requirements for processes. (Rutherford, 1987b:95; Ewell, 1987:28; Van Os *et al.*, 1987:252) It does not help that such a suspicion has often been well-founded, with accreditors sometimes paying only lip-service to the character and particular goals of each institution.

Accreditors, then, have too often had poor relationships with the schools which seek their accreditation, especially nontraditional schools. In fact, a reading of the literature causes a suspicion that lack of trust between accreditors and schools might well be the main cause of problems in the North American style of accreditation, and why discussion easily produces heat rather than light.

Van Os *et al.* do not understate the case when they say that trust between accreditor and accreditee is a *conditio sine qua non*. Trust is two-way; the accreditor can expect honest information from the school, and the school expects the accreditor to use of the information responsibly. (1987:252, 255) Trust is especially necessary to accreditation which depends on consensus.

Harris suggested criterion-referenced specifications of performance to avoid subversion by interest groups (1990:52). However this is simply reversion to the process model of accreditation. Besides, interest groups could easily subvert it at the stage of formulating criteria or of interpreting and applying them in concrete situations.

Accreditors can take steps to minimize these problems. First, training and orientation of accreditation personnel have become increasingly important. (*E.g.*, Kells, 1986:145)

Second, schools might be allowed to become non-accredited members of the accrediting association so that they can see and trust the accreditor's deliberating processes, and if necessary, urge for reform from inside rather than from outside. Barnett is clearly right to say that accreditation depends heavily on people's personalities and on how well they have been "socialized" into the "game." (Barnett, 1987:288, based on Alexander and Wormald, 1983:108)

Third, selection of members of the accreditor's visiting team is important because interest-group ethics play such an important role in establishing trust and fairness. It is difficult to assume that training will help them protect interests other than those they are chosen to protect. Although they face in-built tensions between the school's and accreditor's interests, they should be acceptable to both accreditor and evaluee so that both parties feel that their interests are protected. A most attractive solution is to give the evaluee the right to nominate evaluation team members while the accreditor retains the right to approve them. (SPABC, 1988:8) This clearly favors the school, who can select people sympathetic to their particular environment and goals. The accreditor protects its interests both by setting out the criteria for team members and by the right to deny approval. (Alternatively, the accreditor could nominate team members while the evaluee approves them, but this would favor the accreditor's interests and considerably disadvantage the school.)

**Overdependence on Internal Consistency**

Both product evaluation and stakeholderism rest on an internal consistency criterion with some serious weaknesses. The obvious problem with fully depending on internal consistency is the lack of external consistency.

*Values*. Values is a recurring issue and is so closely related to internal consistency that separating them neatly is difficult. Consistency is itself a value, although people sometimes happily accept their inconsistencies. The product model of accreditation uses a fitness-for-purpose value to attain consistency.

A program that fails to reach its goals can simply make them less demanding, so that the means and ends are more consistent with each other. The internal consistency criterion is inadequate to say whether this is a valid and necessary adjustment or an unacceptable lowering of standards; that is, it implies some relativist values.

Scriven points out that the product model is almost pseudo-evaluation. It is a hybrid between managerialism and social science. It uses a managerialist ideology, which manipulates means to achieve ends and then finds out whether the means reached the ends. It also uses a social science ideology that claims to be objective and value-free; evaluators try objectively to evaluate (that is, assign a value to) something, while avoiding responsibility for the values implied in it. This is a contradiction. (1983:234) Scriven shows that means-ends thinking is a value system. In this case, the central problem is that internal consistency is being used an over-riding value; evaluation is quite clearly not value-free.

*Necessary inconsistencies*. Inconsistency is unavoidable; some things will always be in tension. In any system of evaluation that uses an internal consistency criterion, the problem is that some things are necessarily inconsistent. The literature presents many examples:

1. Academics thrive on differences of opinion, even when it makes no difference. (Dressel, 1976:380)
2. Administrators are often deliberately ambiguous in their communications because they deal with many interest groups. (Dressel, 1976:381)
3. Students and teachers see different purposes in evaluation. (Kogan 1986:136; Talbot and Bordage, 1986)
4. Self-evaluation for improvement is in natural tension with summative external evaluation. (Kogan, 1986:135)
5. Consensus is in natural tension with authoritativeness. (Kogan, 1986:135)
6. Financial considerations in decision-making are often in tension with academic considerations, because increased funding can often improve a program (*e.g.*, Tatum, 1987:650)

7. Academic interests are not the same as those of the wider constituency. For example, schools need to anticipate future needs at least as much as serve only present needs. Some curriculum models are concerned with understanding the reasons why something works, while practitioners are satisfied to know that it does. (Bragg, 1984:191)
8. The school's constituency might change their expectations of the school.
9. The kind of prospective students available might not suit the roles of graduates.

Although it is admirable that schools strive to make consistent things over which they sometimes have little control, consistency is an impossible ideal.

*Ferris's solution.* When editing the ATA manual, Ferris confronted the problem of lack of external consistency more indirectly by de-emphasizing the accept-reject distinction. He implied that recognition is context-based; anyone wanting to recognize degrees and recieve transfer credits must have a similar context to the school where the credits or degrees were earned. This implies that credit is not always transferable because it can less easily cross contextual boundaries. (ATA, 1987:7f) Such a cautious attitude seems more accepting of weaker programs but implies less recognition than accreditation has traditionally given. This attitude has the advantages of accounting for both context and the value-added effect, but it is not much of an answer to give accreditation more freely and have it mean less. The principle of only transferring credit to compatible programs applies anyway, but less quality assurance for recognition is little help to anyone asking whether credits and degrees are worthy of recognition.

*Internal consistency at accreditor level.* At macrocosmic scale, the accreditor faces the same overdependence on internal consistency that schools face at microcosmic level. Bias and conflict of interest problems loom large. Scriven complained that schools in the same accrediting community are "incestuous" when they accredit each other. (1983:252) While nobody respects a degree mill that sets up its own accreditor to accredit itself (Bear, 1980:28), the question is whether a group of schools can accredit themselves. After all, self-regulation is a euphemism for a cartel. All participants share interests in common, potentially biasing consensus groups which function at accreditor level. Apparently responding to the same problem, Kells noted that many accreditors stipulate that peer reviewers must not be staff of schools which compete directly with the evaluee school. (1986:142) Although Kells' suggestion does not solve the theoretical problem, it is helpful at a practical level. JCSEE pointed out that program evaluations frequently have conflict of interest problems, and the challenge is not so much to avoid them but to deal with them. (1981:70; see pp. 24ff, 70ff for further discussion.)

Generic objectives and interschool consensus groups are still systems of internal consistency, but simply in a bigger group. Both use a sociological ethical base with its overtones of relativism; something is deemed to be correct if people in a given population agree on it. Stakeholderism, for example, only ensures that the program evaluation will satisfy identifiable stakeholders as well as possible at the time of the evaluation. House calls this a subjectivist ethic based on the maximized happiness in a society, adding that a objectivist ethic of "justice-as-fairness" is possible but nobody has suggested an evaluation model using it. (1983:49f) However, Scriven's consumerism shows more than a trace of the idea of justice, and the formulations of generic objectives are at least open for rational debate. Accreditor's policies are normally written in a handbook where they are open to examination and evaluation.

*External consistency and consensus groups*. Schools can be easier to evaluate if part of the process is already done through adequate external consistency mechanisms. Where possible, a school can be more sure of its standards if its consensus group extends beyond its immediate

stakeholders and even beyond the accreditation association to an even wider community of schools and practicing professionals. In this way, schools can have comparable standards (that is external consistency) with each other without having uniform processes and program goals.

A wider consensus group is not always possible. If other schools and experts are not available to form one, a school has no option but to depend on internal consensus. A wider consensus group is not always desirable either. Despite undoubted success in maintaining standards of content, a network of schools which becomes a consensus group faces the temptation to become a private club. A school's interests might conflict with the opinions of the wider academic community. A school might need someone to tell it that its program is all wrong, and it cannot always respond with accusations that others are unwilling to understand nontraditional education. Then again, the school might have an excellent program, but others might be so steeped in "traditional" models they consider the school to be weak. It is also quite possible that consensus groups think mainly in terms of institutional prestige or that they encourage empty typewriter practices that lower program quality.

The British have traditionally approached the problem by using wide consensus groups. While they also expect staff to be well-qualified and their institutions to be autonomous, new schools often seek a consensus group through other institutions. For example, all new British universities have started with an Academic Advisory Committee to ensure the establishment of adequate standards. (Perry, 1976:121; see also Booth and Booth, 1989:282) British-style schools employ thesis readers and examination markers from other schools to ensure comparable standards. London University and the CNAA have both tutored into existence new institutions, which only took more responsibility in granting their own degrees when they could maintain comparable standards. In this way, the new schools had strong programs from their inception.

Some consensus group members can have ongoing administrative authority in the school, such the members of an examination board. Others might carry permanent portfolios on an advisory board according to their specialist areas of expertise in content, professional practice, or education; alternatively, they might join the board temporarily to do a particular task with a set specifications. External thesis readers and examination markers can make real decisions according to their area of expertise without becoming part of the administrative structure.[11]

Subject matter specialists maintain informal links with other people teaching in the same discipline, and the relationship can be important even without organizational links. Brennan calls the interschool network of people in the same field of study the "invisible college." According to one study, it is a more important reference point to British university teachers than their employing school. (1986:152)

Consensus groups can easily be national, and can become international when schools send theses to foreign readers. While American schools tend to sacrifice a potentially wider consensus group to maintain autonomy, the British prefer to forgo some autonomy in order to gain a wider consensus group. Both face the reality that schools cannot have complete academic independence while depending on others for academic standards.

11 As a variation of interschool dependency, nontraditional schools can ensure academic standards by buying packaged subjects (usually comprising self-study books and kits, examination blanks, and teacher's guides) from accredited schools. By using them in the same way at the same academic level for students in a comparable context, unaccredited schools can validly claim that subjects are accreditable.

Accreditation models, if they are to be adequate, cannot rely completely on internal consistency. The idea of wider consensus groups and the interests of the accrediting community all imply that external consistency between schools and with schools further afield is necessary and helpful. It is interesting that the SPABC allows members of the accreditor's visiting evaluation team to come from outside their association. (1988:8) This is a helpful trend as it allows cross-fertilization with a wider consensus group and avoids excessive dependence on internal consistency.

**Interpersonal Models and Accreditation**

Stakeholderism facilitates eclecticism, being open to many different sources and topics of information. For example, it is open to information about processes and products, and to the opinions of content experts and program managers. It is similarly open to the opinions and observations of non-experts and consumers. It would be difficult to justify the neglect of any of these bodies of insight. Stakeholders might also want information from outside consultants and empirical studies. Its procedure is highly interactive; Ferris even sees responsive evaluation as a variation of stakeholderism. (1986:4f) Whatever other concepts of quality are in use, interpersonal models greatly depend on consensus and can take advantage of its many strengths.

# 12
# CONCLUSIONS ON MODELS

Quality is a more complex issue than it appears. Almost every model can be useful at times, and it appears almost impossible to have only one in isolation, let alone set it up as an ideal. All have weaknesses or limitations, and all make assumptions and foreshadow types of program evaluations.

Eclecticism is not a surprising conclusion; the interrelationship between curriculum models largely foreshadows it. If curriculum studies are any guide, it is improbable that accreditors can produce an eclectic model that perfectly balances all constituent models and elements. (*Cf.* Print, 1987:72) Also like curriculum models, the views of quality implied in varying evaluation models do not always combine into theoretically consistent concepts; some combinations seem all but impossible. A product model at its heart believes in effability so by nature it does not mix with ineffability, or with the extreme versions of the environment-experience model that hold that educators should not predetermine learning outcomes.

Some differences between models are less substantial than they appear, reflecting simply the different emphases, backgrounds, and personalities of different leading evaluators. (*Cf. e.g.*, Stake, 1983:290; Stufflebeam, 1983:122-124)

In practice, accreditors and schools invariably combine different models of quality, uncritically and probably unconsciously. The ATS (1987) mentioned a variety of elements in passing and assumed them all to be valid, including accountability, consensus, felt needs, resources and facilities, professional standards, and learning environment. Hopkins (1987:5) uses the word "quality" to mean accountability, teaching-learning process, and use of resources to create the best possible learning conditions. Solmon (1981) suggested even more aspects in his eclectic view.

The product model answers questions about purpose and tangible results. Interpersonal models are not only useful, they are unavoidable in terms of interest-group ethics. They can produce an abundance of information, even including data on products and objectives. More than that, product and interpersonal evaluation are interdependent because stakeholder evaluation acts like a feedback loop on a means-ends model. When a school reaches the program evaluation stage in the means-ends cycle, it needs feedback from the people in the program (that is, its stakeholders) to understand itself accurately and how to revise its program. Not only that, the cycle also applies to accreditors who need feedback to evaluate their accreditation program.

Even staff holding the most rigid product notions want to come to some kind of consensus on their objectives, and they rely on consensus to interpret them similarly. Schools which hold that quality is largely ineffable always produce literature which describes their programs. In fact, it would be very difficult to find a completely pure example of any one model.

The arguments for responsible eclecticism are very strong. The characteristics of modern program evaluation, its models, and the models of quality tend to harmonize. Accreditation of nontraditional education needs to include most of them.

**Eclecticism and the CIPP Model**

The CIPP (Context, Input, Processes and Product) model is another major model of program evaluation which can be related to accreditation. As an eclectic model, it is ill-fitted to the previous chapters and well illuminates the role of eclecticism.

The early form of the CIPP model was a solution to some of the weaknesses of Tyler's evaluation model of quantitative evaluation, but it changed over time. In some ways, it still closely resembles Tyler's model of curriculum in that it works from needs to processes and then to fulfillment of need expressed as a product. Unlike Tyler's evaluation model (which used a pretest and a post-test), CIPP could evaluate a program at one time at any stage from planning to implementation.

As its name suggests, CIPP implies that evaluation comprises four loci, which largely reflect the time sequence in developing a program:

*Context* refers to program justification. This includes defining the target population and their needs and underlying problems, as well as the institutional context.

*Input* refers to the prescription of a program, especially in terms of alternative strategies, institutional capability, and design practicalities.

*Process* refers to a check on the implementation of the plan. The process check aims to provide feedback to staff, guide program improvement, assess whether staff roles are appropriate, and document the program.

Product evaluation is the measurement and judgment of the program's achievements and side-effects, especially in terms of whether needs are met. Stufflebeam also mentions input from a wide variety of program participants and the use quantitative evaluation. (Stufflebeam, 1983)

Eclecticism is a strength of the model. It includes many aspects that the omission of which would be a weakness. It includes the key advantages of the product approach, as well as program feedback, program change during implementation, and awareness of the difference between intended and actual results. It also even hints at stakeholderism.

It risks many of the weaknesses in Tyler's early models such as its conceptions of product, and it does little to imply a methodology; it is more like an umbrella that provides a rationale for many techniques and local situations. Although these weaknesses disqualify it as an adequate accreditation model, it does at least show that eclecticism is a viable option.

# 13
# CLASSIFICATION

Ferris uses the term "classification" simply to differentiate degree levels (1984:3). The idea is basically that accreditation agencies should not impose evaluation on programs but should clearly identify them according to predetermined categories.

In one sense, classification is a contradiction; it is evaluation by categories. Such a system could easily degenerate into process accreditation. A classification system says that if a program has some particular kinds of skills or products, then it is a particular degree. Evalu-ees, on the other hand, tend to perform according to what they think will be evaluated, so they develop those particular types of skills or products; they are more interested in ensuring that their degrees are presently accreditable than in finding out how good they are. In so doing, they see the requirement of particular skills or products as process accreditation.

The problem is that classification depends on the terms in which the accreditor defines particular degrees. It does not really matter that they appear to be criteria rather than classifications; the central issue is the particular skills or products, which only involve processes inasmuch that products seldom can be usefully defined in complete isolation from processes. This requires a philosophy of basic categories, the subject of the present section.

A classification system has several advantages. To use a consumerist term, it helps identify false labeling, in this case referring to good programs which have degree titles higher than they should be. The mainly cognitive classifications are a conceptual basis upon which accreditors, program developers, and consensus groups can draw conclusions. Furthermore, such a system can de-emphasize the image of accreditors of imposing process criteria on schools, because schools are free to choose some of the classifications of their programs. That is, by having many pre-defined classifications, accreditors can help schools protect their interests better, especially those relating to program uniqueness.

Classifications encourage organized diversity rather than dictate uniformity. The accreditor needs a system of external consistency and each school needs to be able to protect its autonomy and uniqueness from the accreditor. There does not seem to be any simple formula to get a perfect balance between the interests of each, but the balance of power at the negotiation table has seldom leant in favor of schools which are seen to be nontraditional.

By choosing a particular degree, schools choose which set of classifications their program should be. For example, when a school chooses to offer a Diploma, the realities of the program should also be classifiable as a Diploma. In fact, a Diploma program which is actually classifiable as a Bachelor degree could be accredited as a Bachelor degree if the stakeholders wished. Such recognition can be quite appropriate in cases where government departments withhold the right to grant degrees for political reasons.

It is possible to classify programs in many ways besides nomenclature, but they a postulatory style of thought. Almost by definition, postulates are not necessarily suited to direct referencing. These include whether it is scientific, technological or technical, its delivery system, level of professionalism, and degree meaning. Although institutional, curriculum, and quality models are seldom pure non-eclectic types, it would be helpful if schools identified them. As a dimension of models this list of classification variables is not comprehensive, and adding more is quite possible.

The simplest way to categorize a program is by looking at its objectives, and this section devotes considerable space to objectives. However, program objectives can not only be quite difficult to interpret, but as mentioned above, they cannot adequately describe a program. They also need program feedback from multiple perspectives (i.e. stakeholders), making the program description much more complex. Even with these added considerations, a program with a small number of well-written objectives is easier to classify than a program with no clear objectives. The first step is classification, however, is to defend the idea that degrees should have a coherent meaning.

# 14
# DEGREE MEANING AND PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The first basic necessity of a degree is that it must have a coherent, meaningful structure; unstructured programs have little meaning and do not denote any particular learning. Without first establishing that particular meanings are necessary, one cannot even discuss types of degree meaning, let alone accredit and classify them. In other words, program structure is part of accreditability, even though many different kinds of structure may be valid.

**Majors and Disciplines**

At first it appears odd that anyone would even want to offer degrees with content so vaguely structured that degrees lack clear, coherent meanings. In 1972, Valley noted styles of nontraditional education in which a major characteristic is interdisciplinary offerings with no clear focus (pp. 100ff). Similarly, Dressel noted some past forms of interdisciplinary education that tended to comprise a quick look at many areas of study without particularly expecting students to understand them. (1976:311f) A decade later, Lynton suggested that many North American undergraduate degrees lack coherence, preferring breadth over specialization. The problem is exacerbated for older students who study intermittently. (1986:32)

Some objections to installing formal majors in degree programs are that it would be restrict students to established disciplines and styles of thinking, irrelevance, and lack of response to real, practical issues.

However, a lack of a majors produces a weak "jumble sale" structure, a mixture of different things but nothing in particular. (See Perry, 1976:60f) The modern Bachelor of Arts in General Studies is a conglomeration of miscellaneous credits with breadth but no depth, and it cannot lead to further study that requires an undergraduate major.[12]

More than that, it implies that the program lacks clear general objectives. Unwillingness to instal a system of majors is inconsistent with a desire for clear objectives. As a result, majors quite unobtrusively creep in the back door when programs develop special emphases. Majors reflect program objectives rather than what might be considered "traditional" fields of study. Program objectives naturally, even unavoidably, produces a system of majors, and a problem with majors almost certainly means a problem with program goals.

Defining a unitary area of study is in a sense disciplinary. It might use existing subdisciplines or interdisciplinary fields, or create new ones. It might re-categorize information according to a different cultural viewpoint, or adapt to a curriculum model other than the academic.

12 The degree has some advantages. It can create informal majors in particular areas of interest not otherwise available (*cf.* USNY, 1986:11), and it can also be a way of getting into otherwise inaccessible courses.

**The Modular Program and Sequencing**

The structure of general degree programs tends to be almost axiomatic. It starts with an introductory section, has a longer central section which holds the bulk of the course work and builds on the introductory subjects, and then finishes with either preparation for research, or a thesis, or a major project. That is, the subjects at the later stages of the program are more advanced and have more academic value. Modularism challenges this type of thinking.

For the purposes of this study, a modular program is one which is designed so that students can study subjects in any order at all. To do this, each subject (or module) is designed to be completely self-contained and includes all prerequisite knowledge, instruction, and evaluation.

The terms "module" and "modular" have various meanings in the literature. For example, Carr simply uses it to denote the distinct subjects in a teacher training program. (1987:50f) Van Eijl goes further when he says that modules should have coherent, unitary content and that they include learning and evaluation. He also interrelates modules by sequencing or clustering them. (1986:451) NATFHE uses a meaning similar to that of Van Eijl, but discusses the relationship between modules more clearly. Some participants want to "pick and mix" modules so that course offerings could flex to specific kinds of need. Except for a few free-standing modules, however, each module should contribute directly to the meaning of the degree, whether or not programs use a "core plus options" system. (1987:18f, 28, 30)

Modularization has several advantages. Students can learn what they want when they need it. Program directors do not need to concern themselves with what students have already done when suggesting subjects to them. Text writers are more independent of the content of texts used in other subjects. The use of credits (such as semester hours) is the most common and most successful type of modularizing although credits are seldom insular enough to stand alone. As education is to some extent cumulative, students who have completed many subjects usually have more insight when faced with another introductory subject.

The modular curriculum, however, is not free of problems. By definition, totally insular modules detract from unitary program objectives and degree meaning. Insular modules discourage students from integrating learning across module boundaries and do little more than collect credit. Program objectives are no more than generalizations or accumulations of module goals.

In the completely modular curriculum, every subject is introductory. It can work when modules are big enough to equip students to tackle the more advanced issues. However, it can easily devalue academic currency when every subject is a shallow introduction that repeats basic teaching and bores senior students. (*Cf.* Tyler, 1949:85)

A completely modular curriculum is an unrealistic ideal and modules can seldom be completely insular. The distinction between introductory and advanced subjects is almost inevitable. Some textbook authors aim academically higher than others so their subjects naturally become non-introductory; some subjects are naturally more difficult and specialized anyway. Despite being no longer truly introductory, these subjects should not be open to beginning students. The same is also true of naturally introductory subjects remaining open to advanced students.

Such realities can create other difficulties for the modular curriculum, because students often can and do study advanced subjects before studying truly introductory subjects. The introductory course might be unnecessary or is too easy to be a for-credit subject, or students

might face subjects that they find too difficult. Students who go later to study introductory subjects also face the problem of studying, not to learn, but merely to gain credit.

Rather than keep all subjects open but too difficult for first-time students, there are several solutions, most of which refer to relationships between modules. Being no longer completely independent, they are no longer modules in the strictest sense.

Warwick notices that the more coherent the degree, the more sequenced it is and the more it focusses on subject matter. The more choice students have, the greater the possible fragmentation. To produce coherence, his model suggests various relationships between modules; the order below starts with those least dependent on sequencing and ends with those most dependent:

1. Modules are complementary with some rationale behind their selection and something that binds them together coherently.
2. Modules are presented in chronological order of historical content.
3. Different modules present different aspects of the same phenomenon.
4. Two modules run at the same time because the material is interdependent and students need to do both.
5. Students must do prescribed modules in a set order. (1987)

Even then, the problem in complementary modules is that they are all introductory. Consequently, each must be big enough to have internal sequencing so that students do some advanced work.

Sequencing is a simple solution usually found in credit systems and there are good arguments for it. It is better to identify some subjects as introductory, others as more advanced, and some as prerequisite for more advanced subjects. Content matter is only one aspect; new students often lack adequate writing and study skills to cope with more advance subjects. Means-ends curriculum theory usually includes organization of content and teaching methods as ways of achieving objectives. (Tyler, 1949:85; Taba, 1962; Wheeler, 1974; Nicholls and Nicholls, 1978) Sequencing makes degree definitions and program objectives easier to write and more meaningful. It also means that course writers can presume sequenced writing and study skill. Besides, lack of sequencing between subjects is inconsistent with the strict sequencing used within subjects.

**Long-term Structure: The Idea of a Continuing Product**

Strict sequencing between subjects, however, is difficult over very long periods. Some subjects are better taught in sequences or clusters, or with deliberate overlap. Some large modules can sustain enough internal meaning to stand alone. Some curriculum models (for example, cognitive, problem solving) are more suitable to long-term study than others because it is easier to repeat their key knowledge areas. Full degree programs in extension by course work usually take such a long time that students can easily forget what they learnt before they graduate.

For example, if students did a subject ten years ago, does it mean that they might as well not have done it? The standard kind of TEE answer is that if students are using what they have learnt, then they might well come to understand more about the topic. It is attractive to think that the knowledge of long-term students is more androgenous and functional, but such assumptions depend on whether students really use what they learn and whether it is useful.

It is better to question whether such knowledge even still exists. Students too often let it fall into disuse and forget much of it, yet educators have no way of knowing how much stu-

dents have remembered because they do not examine students again at graduation. In fact, the most lasting effect is that those credits are still counted towards the degree. It sounds good to say that structure is necessary to the program, but in reality, the longer the program takes the easier it is to lose real structure.

The problem is not peculiar to extension education. Some extension degrees do not take much longer than full-time study on campus; this is especially true of extension degrees that include short periods on campus. The M.A. and the Cert.Theol. suit TEE well simply because they are shorter and their program structure can more easily reflect a central thrust. Besides, nobody questions long-term, part-time campus study even though it faces the same problem.

The real question might be, "What is the structure of the product?" For example, it does not really matter if an ordinary ministerial student forgets the wording of the Nicean Creed, the date of the Diet of Worms, or the details of Neoplatonism. Subjects need only a few higher-level complex objectives which can subsume basic information and skills which students need to remember.

The point is that schools needs to take responsibility in showing that essential knowledge is not forgotten, as it is the basis upon which they grant degrees.

Nevertheless, defining a product is harder. A Bachelor's degree can take up to fifteen years in extension. Does this mean that it will take twenty years before the school can evaluate its product? If a school wants to emphasize lifelong study, is it really consistent if it focusses on the final product of a degree program?

It can be helpful to think of the product as continuing rather than final. The continuing product is what students can be shown to have learnt at any stage in the program up to graduation. Through continued use and revision, the students accumulates a body of knowledge to which additional learning contributes. The continuing product should be expressed as objectives which are suited to long-term retention, perhaps using Brunerian spiral curricula or emphasizing such things as the philosophy of the subject and its main ideas, thinking skills, problem-solving strategies, the use of tools, and applied practical skills. In any case, the product description should show whether students are on target to reach program objectives. In a long-term program, the idea of a continuing product better represents what really happens. Program objectives seem to imply an intention to reach them as if they were static, but they are really a moving target that continually evolves during the program. (Dressel, 1976:7)

A continuing product can be a substitute for an eventual product. An evaluator can evaluate the present form of a program and say whether it is producing its intended product, even if it does not yet have any graduates. He does not have to wait twenty years to see whether the first group of students were successful.

Despite different roles in program evaluation, the idea of continuing product somewhat resembles spiral sequencing, first suggested by Bruner. In this approach, the curriculum developer orders content so that students at each level study the same areas of knowledge. The content at each level not only extends students' knowledge but also reinforces that which students learnt at lower levels. (*Cf.* Print, 1987:119, 1985:69f)

There are several ways to evaluate a continuing product, but some of them are less than ideal. Schools can provide periodical review or testing. Schools which emphasize applied skills could periodically test students by supervised practicum, although they seldom do so. It is also possible to administer comprehensive final examinations.

As discussed above, non-spiral sequencing is simple and straightforward. Spiral sequencing enables teachers to review and evaluate the continuing product periodically and to evaluate the accumulated product at the end of the program.

Many schools successfully test the culminating product, that is, the highest level at which students can perform. The thesis and supervised practicum report provide concrete evidence of degree-level achievement.

**Conclusion**

By having unitary subject areas, responding appropriately to modularity and sequencing, and avoiding breakdown in long-term programs, degree programs can have the coherent structure they need to have a particular meaning. Only on such a basis is it possible to progress the matter of the accreditor's approach to degree meaning.

# 15
# THE MEANINGS OF DEGREES

To be accreditable, a degree needs to be more than simply coherent; it needs a recognizable identity and a valid, credible knowledge base. For present purposes, a degree is an academic award or credential of any level or kind, not only a university-level graduation credential. Spurr (1970:3) mentions both the general and specific meanings, with the latter usually differentiating between degree and non-degree programs, sometimes arbitrarily. The general meaning is more suited to an accreditation context.

The meaning of a degree is an arbitrary convention, standardized within a region or community to avoid misunderstanding; it has no absolute meaning. North American and British degree definitions usually differ, and other countries also have their own. It is ethnocentric and paternalistic to define all degrees in terms of a single Western country.

The task of defining degrees is not easy; they are like the proverbial moving gray shapes in the twilight. Many fluctuating variables make it very difficult to define degrees precisely, and the system of classifications below have many indistinct edges, reflecting the vagaries of real programs and the influences acting upon them.

First, the value-added effect means that different schools could not have completely uniform degree meanings even if they wanted. Not only that, each school has its own unique degree programs; there is no such thing as a degree apart from the school that awards it. Hartnett notes that this prevents degree meanings from being uniform (pp. 30ff) with both student and staff populations of widely varying ability.

Even more specifically, each student has a different degree because the degree comprises two parts: the degree status itself and the grades on the transcript. The latter, which largely determines whether a student may continue to a higher degree program, usually differs from student to student. (*Cf.* Spurr, 1970:7) This is important in comparing two students from the same school, one getting very high grades but not quite enough to graduate, and the other with all low grades but finishing the degree. (Hartnett, 1972:28f; Warren, 1974:126)

Furthermore, degrees can change meaning over time, both in each school and throughout a region, sometimes even reflecting changed concepts of the goals of higher education. Drastic changes in North American undergraduate education have left its Bachelor's degree inadequately defined; the old meaning, based on the residential college tradition, is being completely revised. (Young, 1983b:400) It is not yet clear what sort of consensus will arise, if at all. Degree meanings can be even more problematical in countries without stable traditions of higher education.

Degree meanings are subject to upwards and downwards pressures. Some schools aspire to be elite and exclusive while others follow market pressure in making degrees more accessible to students of average ability. Even within the same institution, some departments can be

elite with small enrollments of carefully-selected students while others have very large populations of average students. Schools naturally tend to be more demanding in their highest degree program no matter what level it is, and some schools have a "consolation prize" degree for otherwise failing students.

The clearest example of this problem is the Master's degree. According to Spurr, many schools with strong doctoral programs have weak Master's programs. The Master of Philosophy is sometimes even awarded as a consolation prize to students who have failed the Doctor of Philosophy. (1970:24, 67, 170) Dressel notes that some North American Master's degrees are available by credit accumulation alone, in contrast to schools which offer the Master's degree as their highest degree and maintain much higher standards. (1976:320) Bear goes so far as to suggest that the Master's degree is either a higher Bachelor's degree or a junior doctorate. (1980:15)

Institutions can try to rationalize the upper limits of a program into higher degrees. For example, what was once a senior Bachelor's degree can become a junior Master's degree. (Ramsey, 1978:215; Sheridan, 1983:70) Prospective students want higher degrees (or actually the same knowledge and skills in a similar degree with a higher name) so the market puts pressure on the education system to make them more accessible.

Besides these variables, the task of defining degrees is made difficult by the range of degrees available. Any system of degree classifications must be able to include all sorts; for example, the tradesman who gets a certificate on passing a practical test, the undergraduate who wants to transfer credit, and the graduate degreeholder.

**The Contribution of Spurr**

It is quite difficult to discuss the meanings of degrees without referring to the work of Spurr (1970). He is exemplary in his willingness to understand sympathetically the differences between European and North American degree systems. Generally speaking, he tends to describe degrees in terms of years of full-time study, the role of examinations, the amount of specialization, the role of research, the professional-academic dichotomy, and the coursework-thesis dichotomy. While not sufficiently accurate for the present discussion on accreditation, his kind of degree descriptions were practical and adequate for his purposes at the time, although they easily become outdated.

At least some of his basic ideas are still highly applicable. His basic thesis was that the number of degree titles should be kept as low as possible, but unfortunately it had little lasting influence on North American education. He suggested that a single degree title should carry no undesirable connotations and provide the student with maximum future opportunity to study and work. To this end he suggested that degree titles (that is, excluding the student's grades on the transcript) should mark successful completion of a program of study without making implications on students' fitness to continue to further study. He also suggested that degrees should have interrelated structures so that students have maximum freedom to redirect their studies into other programs, and that kinds of institutions and degree programs be interwoven rather than be discrete units. (Pp. 22-27) In response, however, it might be added that some degrees (such as those awarded through pre-research and bridging programs) are specifically defined by readiness to continue to other programs.

**Conceptions of Degrees**

One of the simplest ways to interpret a particular program is to identify its conceptions of the degree, recognizing that in reality conceptions seldom occur as pure, mutually exclusive

types. Some conceptions directly parallel types of schools and most include the ways in which they are taught, that is, their delivery systems. For example, two degrees with the same name can have very different meanings. A Bachelor of Divinity program requiring six years of coursework does not mean the same as others comprising a Bachelor of Theology and a major thesis, or a Bachelor of Theology and a guided reading program. Many schools combine various delivery systems, and the kind of knowledge and degree meaning shifts according to the particular blend.

The list below is not necessarily comprehensive but, except for several unsatisfactory conceptions, it illustrates how easily a nontraditional school could validly use them to create new kinds of degrees.

1. The degree refers to the piece of paper which is awarded, not the person. This conception encourages the degree mill mentality and the empty typewriter syndrome, and is generally a danger to good education. (See *e.g.*, Bear, 1980:146-173) It is not technically correct either; the diploma is not the degree but a written statement which attests to the degree. (*Cf. e.g.*, Spurr, 1970:3)
2. The easiest way to say what a degree means is to say how many years of satisfactory full-time study it takes, and Hartnett almost gave up hope of assigning any other clear meanings to degrees. (Houle, 1973:127; Hartnett, 1972:30) This is simply to import the weaknesses and inaccuracies of the metric concept of quality.
3. Purely honorary degrees appear to fall into two categories:
   a. Some have no academic value as they are given for services rendered to the school or to the community, or sometimes for money donated.
   b. Others are a mark of recognition of expertise especially for inventions, teaching, and some kinds of leadership, but they are not usually equivalent to earned degrees. Honorary degrees usually have special designations. For example, the Doctor of Divinity and Doctor of Letters degrees are honorary, in contrast to the Doctor of Theology and Doctor of Philosophy, which are earned. It is a source of confusion in North America that nomenclature does not differentiate between these two kinds or between them and higher assessment doctorates. It does not help that purely honorary degrees have been so readily available. (See Bear, 1980:146ff) The dangers of these kinds of degrees are readily apparent.
4. The degree is a mark of qualitative change; the student has become a different kind of person. (Houle, 1973:127) This conception parallels the humanistic and cognitive models of curriculum. It is open to abuse when degreeholders lack an acceptable cognitive knowledge base.
5. The degree signifies acculturation into an identifiable community (Houle, 1973:128f), even though the student will likely leave it upon graduation. While still important in some schools, this degree conception needs some descriptors of a knowledge base, which it must import from other conceptions.
6. The degree shows that the student has passed assessment exercises showing adequate mastery of a predetermined body of knowledge; a school could not refuse a degree to a student who presented good work. This implies that education is a commodity and a degree is a label for how much of it one has. It also implies that the goal of education is the acquisition of cognitive knowledge and that schools can standardize levels of achievement.

It allows varied assessment styles. By favoring a hard view of objectives, assessment might be limited to a battery of objective tests, so that anyone who passes them gets a degree. Alternatively, a "softer" view of objectives might produce assessment that requires students to

be able to interact with a complex body of knowledge and to engage in analytical-critical thought.

This model encourages a view of the school as either an assessment program or an instructional institution. It has a past orientation; the degree certifies what has already passed and implies that degree-holders will leave the school after graduation. Concerning the future, it sometimes assumes that graduates will be able continue lifelong study at the highest level of achievement attained during the degree program. It has several variations:

1. A great deal of education comprises course work which produces degrees based on credit accumulation. A few have not many requirements other than credit totals, while most have a structure, comprising at least a major and a distinction between lower and upper levels. (*Cf.* USNY, 1986)

   Course work is the type of knowledge most students want and need. Much of it aims to gives students an ability in a field of knowledge (such as a discipline, a subdiscipline, or a vocation) which is broader and shallower than that needed to carry out original research on a particular problem. It can teach at any level of the Bloom's taxonomy of objectives (discussed in a later chapter), but less often at the highest levels.

   The first and most well-known model of TEE is the Guatamalan, which uses workbooks and PI (Programmed Instruction) texts for course work. Another is practicum-centered academic studies, using field experiences as a basis for coursework. In other cases, tutors might oversee structured essay-writing programs, and extension schools might teach course work on campus for short, intensive periods between which students must carry out self-study tasks.

   In contrast, some other kinds of course work are especially intended to prepare student for original research. These include guided reading programs, tutored minor research, and specialist seminars. They are different from ordinary course work, both in purpose and level of difficulty. A whole degree comprising only one of these would in some cultures seem highly innovative, such as a short graduate degree consisting only of reading courses.
2. The degree is a license for professional practice. The best example is the unaccredited law school. The law degree is unrecognized, but graduates may legally practice as lawyers if they may take and pass the bar examination.
3. The degree is certification of training for employment purposes. In this extremely functionalist view, employers determine whether a program will be successful. It does not offer much to the non-applied sciences or to research, and it favors a harder view of educational objectives.
4. The degree is a mark of research expertise given on the basis of a significant work of research. Purely research degrees are best construed as having specific meanings and representing highly specialized education. It is rather prejudiced to say they are overspecialized, except perhaps when thesis topics do not enhance the student's subsequent employability. The point is to use research to show the highest level at which a student can perform and to produce concrete evidence that he has done so. The only way it shows breadth is by assuming that students need an adequate knowledge base to carry out research. These schools presume that someone with research-level thinking skills continue doing more research of the same standard.

   Each school indicates the way it views the meaning of its degrees by the way it treats its thesis programs. One school might treat a large thesis as a course work subject and allocate a semester-hour rating, while another might just say that it is a major thesis with no semester hour rating. Each places a different value on both coursework and the thesis, and the meaning of the degree shifts accordingly. (See Laverty [1988] for a discussion on

research in nontraditional education.)
Some extension programs belong to this category. A graduate degree program might consist of a major thesis or of a portfolio of smaller research works, which constitute a product. The school describes what it wants, often mentioning word totals and typically saying such things as "major contribution to a field of study", "significant original thought," "a scholarly work," and "literary merit." It still takes responsibility for coordination and supervision, but often liases with other institutions for library facilities. Some programs, usually practitioner higher degrees, emphasize applied studies which produce major writing projects. Institutes are "traditional" when they provide campus facilities and supervision, even when their students are based elsewhere doing field research. Institutes more easily attract the label of "nontraditional" when they are independent schools which do not provide on-site study facilities.

5. A transcript acts as a degree when it circulates as an independent unit of currency, either as an academic reference or as a basis for transfer credit. This is especially the case where students take subjects without intending to finish the full degree program. (*Cf.* Warren, 1974:120; USNY, 1986:23)
6. The degree is election as a peer within an identifiable community of scholars on the basis of appropriate scholarly attitudes and abilities, usually as manifested in a particular piece of written work. The medieval universities very successfully used this definition for the Master's degree; the group of peers had a clear idea of what they expected. (Goodman, 1971:107) Having a diploma is unimportant because the degree is primarily an internal status which need not be recognized outside the school; consequently, it can be quite sensible for teaching staff to have their highest degree from their own school. In this view, a school might refuse a degree to a student who presented good work but who could not show that he was a peer. It implies that the group of academics control the granting of degrees and run it like a cartel. It also has a future orientation, implying that graduates will be active members of the institution after graduation.
7. Some assessment degrees are not coursework, and the degree has a quite different meaning. Some European-style institutions grant the higher earned "honorary" doctoral degrees on the basis of published research. (North American schools do not give it and usually give the Doctor of Philosophy as their highest degree.) The degree might be called "honorary" or "degree by supplication" but in either case it is equivalent to an earned research degree. Some schools require far more research than for ordinary earned research doctorates (*e.g.*, Ph.D.), so that the supposedly "honorary" degree is in fact far academically superior and is recognized as such. In some cases, it is the normal way for academic staff to earn a doctorate if they join the teaching staff with lower qualifications. (Spurr, 1970:149, 157, 172f)

**Knowledge Base**

A cognitive knowledge base is essential to a degree. In a rather commonsense approach to the subject, Lane says that a degree program has three objectives, which do not always overlap. They are knowledge of a discipline, preparation for employment, and personal intellectual development. Most degrees have all three, but their proportions vary according to content. (1975:68f) HEC presents almost the same view, seeing degrees of all kinds and levels as comprising:

1. jGeneric and personal skills such as thinking, communicating, taking leadership, working with others, and desiring to learn and re-learn,
2. A body of knowledge as a discipline, and
3. Skills directly applicable to employment. (HEC, 1992:9f)

Compared to the goals of higher education, there seems to be much more consensus in the literature on the knowledge base represented in a degree.

In all cases except purely vocational education (where motor skills are often prominent), the cognitive element is and should be dominant. Too often the main purpose of the degree, and the student's main need, is to master a body of information. (*Cf.* Freedman, 1987:69) This is not to say that it is narrow; it may follow a wide variety of curricular and degree models and reflect various kinds of thinking skills. Some degrees include only cognitive knowledge, like specialized, postprofessional programs. Some degree-granting assessment schools act as centers for branch schools, and choose to leave skill and attitude development to the branch schools as a non-credit activity. It is, however, possible to assess applied skills in an assessment program (*cf.* USNY, 1986:19), or to delegate formal assessment to the school. If schools give assessment degrees in applied fields, they should also assess students' applied skills.

Lane does not mention attitudinal learning, despite his third element having an obvious personal aspect, but he correctly hints that skills and attitudes take a higher profile in some degrees than others. For example, human services programs spend a great deal of time teaching skills and attitudes, their basis in cognitive knowledge, and appropriate practicum.

Not all knowledge has a valid role in formal degree programs. Some nontraditional programs include hobby and recreation subjects for credit even though they add nothing to the academic value of the degree. (*Cf.* Freedman, 1987:47) Others have emphasized affective knowledge so much at the expense of cognitive input that they cannot be considered valid; they are little more than group therapy. (Dressel, 1976:311; Raven, 1991:71f; Meyer, 1976:105)

**Literacy Skills**

Students need to be able to read and write at a standard appropriate to their degree. Hall includes advanced communication skills as necessary to a high-quality degree, including reading writing and language (1987:48f), and another included basic communication skills as necessary for entry to higher education. (College Board, 1983:7-10) It is more an explained axiom than a proven conclusion that a graduate should be able to read a book and understand what it says.[13] Even then, as an example of the arbitrariness of the requirement, it is possible to omit literacy requirements altogether for vocational programs in some countries.

Not all TEE schools readily accept a literacy requirement. Part of the problem comes from a training mentality, which defines goals totally in terms of applied ability and minimizes academic skills. Another part of the problem is overdependence on small-step programmed instruction. Programs can be very weak in literacy skills when PI texts do not expect students to read more than a couple of paragraphs together. "Successful" students are ill-equipped to read. (*Cf.* also Hill 1974:79)

Reading and writing are not teaching tasks but study tasks. Study is not the same as teaching; students can learn by studying resource materials without being taught. Western university teachers can easily assume that students are responsible to study rather than that teachers are responsible to teach. The distinction has some ramifications; it is worth differentiating between self-teaching and self-study materials, both of which have important roles. Only PI is fully self-teaching because the materials replace teachers and take the initiative in teaching. In doing so, PI takes away the student's responsibility to initiate his own study and enquiry. With self-study materials, the student must take initiative and the materials are relatively passive;

13 Theology is a little different, because by nature it requires an ability to read the Scriptures.

they include any material that students can study alone. An ordinary book does not teach the student; he has to study it. Similarly, a student writing a paper has to think through issues himself, arrange the points of his discussion, and arrive at a conclusion.

For lower level students, "reading a book" means that they should voluntarily read and understand books commensurate with their educational level. A degree student should of his own initiative read and understand works of scholarship in his field of learning. Obviously the better traditional schools do everything reasonable to form reading skills in their students and consequently have a better record than TEE.

Student writing is another important dimension. Students must be able to make different kinds of formal and scholarly written responses according to their degree program. Undergraduates should be able to write a formal essay and, in some cases, a minor thesis. (*Cf.* also Melinsky, 1983:302) Students in many Indonesian Bachelor of Theology programs formally present both a minor thesis and a project-like report of the major intensive practicum, which are very tangible evidence of the student's writing ability. The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation recommended that graduate students should produce some sort of "culminating effort" such as a thesis or major project. (1978, chap. II, p. 2) The principle applies for lower levels too. Many educators would expect a Diploma graduate to be able to write a formal essay. Lower-level students should be able to express themselves clearly and neatly in writing, such as in routine correspondence and written examination answers.

**Library and Information Resources**

The lack of libraries in many TEE degree-level programs has traditionally been a sore point when talking about program quality. Because campus programs often depend on a library, campus-oriented accreditors assume that libraries are essential to good education.

The first fallacy is that extension students never have libraries. Short-term campus residency programs can depend on library resources as much as any program can. Research institutes demand bibliographies equal to their campus counterparts, and institutes which do not own libraries need to take responsibility to ensure that students have access to them.

The second fallacy is that accreditors have thought enough about the role of libraries. Some still measure the value of a library simply by saying how many books they think it should have, perhaps including some library usage statistics and specifying that library holdings should be usable. Such standards say nothing directly about whether students should learn anything from library books; campus students can often survive without the library by mastering some well-chosen material which is adequate for written assignments. The assumption that having a library in itself is beneficial is not demonstrably true. The idea that a given number of books is adequate is certainly untrue; some programs do not fewer or none at all, while others need many times more than the minimum or need to monitor more carefully the kind of literature they hold.

The matter at stake, more precisely, is not at all the use of libraries but the kind of knowledge students are expected to get from them.

**Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Categories**

Written information can be primary, secondary, or tertiary. Primary sources are the most valuable for research, being information as expressed by its original authors. Examples include monographs, journal articles, theses, and interviews. A secondary source is primary source information that someone has changed by translating, summarizing, or reviewing it. In tertiary

sources, the original ideas have passed through several re-expressions; the most common examples are the explanations found in many textbooks. (*Cf.* Anderson *et al.*, 1970:18) Another equally valid primary source, although nonliterary, is field research such as interviews and surveys.

The older PI literature strongly emphasized tertiary sources, usually meaning explanations written by the text author himself. Several beliefs caused this kind of thinking. They held that primary source literature was too wordy and its explanations were too vague. They had little regard for skill in handling literature and believed that students should not get exposure to information that they did not need to master. They aimed for students to be able to accomplish objectives, and selected information only as it helped accomplish them. (*e.g.*, Espich and Williams, 1967:22ff; Popham and Baker, 1970:47ff) More recently, Rowntree has defended the position on the grounds that distance education students easily become discouraged and confused by an oversupply of information for the recommended amount of study time. (1990:59; see also pp. 21, 60, 70, 79-84) This attitude to information produced some remarkably clear explanations and awareness of students' limitations, but it also blinded educators to kinds of resources.

From an accreditation perspective, the issue is that, by definition, the original form of knowledge is the primary sources. If students are to be competent in handling it, they need greater freedom than to deal with second-hand explanations and interpretations. Although Certificate and Diploma students do not need to be able to use secondary and primary sources, Bachelor students do, and Master's students need to be able to show considerable skill is using them.

**Length and Complexity**

Another dimension is the length and complexity of information. For present purposes, longer pieces of written communication are assumed to be more complex than shorter pieces, because students must sift through it and interpret it. This dimension is independent of the previous categories; a short quotation can contain primary material and some large libraries contain only tertiary resources.

The simplest form is *information that teachers artificially limit so that students can understand it more easily*. It can be a brief quotation or the simplest possible explanation in the teacher's own words, and assumes students will use all the information provided but none other. It is almost always tertiary.

A little more complex is the *extended quotation* of several pages or more, enough for the student to have to differentiate between what is pertinent and what is not. It can be either primary, secondary, or tertiary, and is well-suited to self-study materials.

More complex again is a *limited supply*, the level almost ideal for distance higher education and often well-suited to lecture-taught subjects on campus. Examples are easy to find almost anywhere in nontraditional and distance education. Students use anthologies of journal articles and sections of books, or several textbooks together, or required reading lists, or even guided reading programs. Like the research library, it tends to contain primary and secondary material; indeed, it often samples the best and most pertinent from the library and thus represents knowledge of a comparable type. Small libraries of carefully selected materials function at this level.

If resources are too meager or inconclusive, the extended quotation and the limited supply invite criticism that students really need a library to take the subject. The criticism is not necessarily justifiable.

The *complex information* resource reflects complex knowledge. The most common form of complex information in higher education is the large research library. The supply of information is as close to limitless as is practically possible, especially if it has an inter-library loan facility. In a few cases, a highly specialized library of primary sources might be very small if hardly anything has been written on its specialization, although the present tendency is to generate literature faster than it can be collected. Students must sharpen their skills in sifting and finding information. The information they use always includes a periphery of unmastered material, and they have the opportunity to find new paths through it. In this case, resources also represent the major authors and publications on the subject, as well as present literature, including topics, trends and progress in present research.

Another form of complex information is latent in society, awaiting field research. It can also be a body of professional experience. Field research is usually complex, primary information, but is not literary. Students can often advance directly from limited resources to field research without library support if the literature on the research topic is negligible and a review is unnecessary. (This is sometimes the case in contextualized studies.)

Much field research is technological. Being situation-specific, it is often poorly circulated and does not contribute to an identifiable body of scholarly literature. Moreover, research is often primarily done for the benefit of the student rather than a body of literature; it might be quite valid but it does not follow the academic curricular model.

Despite the importance of these categories, the differences between them are indistinct. Minimal and extended quotations do not greatly differ. A long collection of extended quotations becomes an anthology. Even the simplest piece of information has semantic components and is in a sense complex. While higher levels of student resources are usually better, this is not always so. A subject using many well-chosen long quotations from primary sources might be far superior to a poorly supervised subject that uses a good library.

**Library-dependency**

The inevitable question is whether or not a school can offer good education without being library-dependent. Some programs depend heavily on libraries, especially if they choose an academic curricular model, or are scientific rather than technological, or focus on content rather than functionality. For these, well-used and efficient libraries can justifiably become central to the program. "Products" are mostly essays, book reviews, reading projects, annotated bibliographies, bibliographic essays, or theses. On the other hand, schools that have libraries must ask whether they depend on the library. If students get all information resources through other means and do not need to use the library, then the library is not part of the program and is superfluous.

It is possible to overstate the value of libraries because they offer only marginal benefit for some kinds of subjects. For example, most self-instructional packages are completely self-contained. Some subjects can be academically equivalent using either limited information resources, field research, or a combination of different kinds of resources.

A means-ends analysis shows whether a library is necessary. Whether the school uses a library or not, it should ensure that students use information according to the program's aims

in categories and taxonomic levels of knowledge. That is, it does not need a library if it can produce evidence of an equivalent product. If, however, the school teaches library-dependent subjects, it must ensure that the library is suitable. Even then, the issue is not whether the school owns the library but whether students have adequate access to it (*e.g.*, Scriven, 1983:252). When this is not practicable and the school needs its own library, then holdings and acquisition plans need to fit the purpose of the library, and the school needs a conscious policy on its use of resources.

Graduate students, however, often need libraries more than can be predicted. Bynner lists several ways to provide them, including electronic communications, postal libraries, libraries of local institutions, local public libraries, and specialized local lending points of central libraries. (Bynner, 1986:31f; see also Laverty, 1988:206ff)

In other words, some programs might be unaccreditable because their libraries are too weak; other very different types of program at the same level are quite accreditable with no libraries at all, and might find a library largely superfluous.

**Terminality and Continuity**

Degrees vary as to whether they are terminal, continuing to further study, or terminal with a bridging option. A terminal degree is designed without reference to the academic requirements of higher degrees. For example, a terminal Master of Arts program does not ensure that students have the research capability which would allow them to attempt a research doctorate.[14] Similarly, some Certificate and Diploma programs do not create options for their graduates to continue to a Bachelor degree, regardless of ability. Spurr sees terminal degrees as an inferior breed because they imply that their graduates are unfit to continue study. (1970:25) Some compromise by providing an optional bridging course for students who want to continue to further study. In fact, it is almost always possible to devise bridging courses for programs which were designed to be terminal.

In contrast, programs like some Bachelor with honors degrees and some Master's degrees specifically equip graduates to continue study, whether or not they do so. A defining characteristic of some highly disciplinary Bachelor programs is the preparedness on its graduates for original research.

**Professionalism**

Another way to classify a program is to see how professional it is, because it reflects the kind of expertise graduates have. "Professional" means that a graduate has sufficient expertise to carry out the responsibilities of a given full-time professional position according to the type and level of his degree. It need not always mean that he is actually full-time. (For example, the standard for training a Sunday-School teacher to professional level is the standard for full-time ministry in children's evangelism or Christian education.) As used here, the term "professionalism" deliberately excludes any connotation that professionals should build elite empires by using their skills, prestige, and credentials.

Higher academic levels rather obviously must be either professional or postprofessional, but professionalism does not imply any particular minimum academic level. Programs for the

14 Switching disciplines between Bachelor and Master has become more common in North America, making corresponding changes in the meaning of the Master's degree. Many Master of Arts programs have this characteristic, although they are weaker in research than their traditional counterparts.

newly literate might be highly professional if the students are already mature, competent leaders whom their community respects.

"Subprofessional" means that the average graduate could at best be only a helpful layman, because his training did not equip him for any more. He would have to develop extra skills to succeed as a full-time professional.

"Postprofessional" means that the student already has professional competency and wants to do further study in one or more specialized areas. For example, if a graduate of a professional Bachelor in Theology and a graduate of a professional Diploma in Theology program continued their study, they might apply to postprofessional Master of Ministry and B.Th. programs respectively. However, the professional B.Th. program would need to be different from the postprofessional B.Th.

Levels of professionalism might seem rather abstract but they refer to the roles into which graduates will fit. Consequently, they are useful for classifying programs and for showing program strengths and weaknesses, and are good criteria for making program decisions. For example, a program is weak if it has professional goals but only equips students to be lay assistants. A postprofessional program needs revision if it does not stretch graduates of professional programs.

The subprofessional program has several problems. First, it invites unfair criticism as being inferior education; this is especially an image problem in nontraditional education. Second, it does not imply a minimum academic standard so in this sense accrediting it is more difficult. As a result, when subprofessional schools give credits that students can transfer to professional programs, they must carefully define their standards and goals, and explain what graduates would need to do to continue to professional education.

**The University and Training Caricatures**

Like its secular counterparts, the TEE movement spent considerable discussing the comparative virtues of the campus and extension models. The problem is better seen as two caricatures.

In the university caricature, educators form a community of scholars who seek enrichment by interacting directly with each other on campus, and indirectly with great scholars by means of a well-stocked research library. The model focusses on theoretical knowledge, conceiving its study to be truly a science with original research as its highest goal. In theological schools, students get relatively little training for professional ministry although most will become pastors. Programs actually aim to equip students for an academic career, and students, comfortable in their ivory towers, consider themselves superior to "workers" who have no skills in handling theory. They think of the church as the church catholic waging a philosophical war against the world, and tend to think of denominational strategy rather than real people. (This caricature may have once been more accurate than it is now, when knowing and doing were more separate. See Kamba, 1984:255f; Denielou, 1984:216)

The alternative to the university caricature is the training caricature. In industry, this is the functionalist extreme; education is no more than practical training to meet the present demands of the workplace. For example, theological education can conceive of theology as mainly skill which is proven only by being immediately practical and useful. It views the church as the basic community, meaning the local congregation, to which pastors should primarily relate and which they should develop by grassroots ministry. Graduates often lack a

universal view of the church and its theological traditions, and have little preparation to participate at denominational level.

These two caricatures remain in tension. Unfortunately, it is possible to adopt them as models, along with their warped perspectives, and create opportunities for fruitless debate. The TEE literature has often used them, as is most clearly exemplified in several articles of fictitious correspondence complaining about the inadequacies of academic learning and the importance of practical and affective training. (Savage, 1976; McKinney, 1980; *cf.* also McKinney, n.d.:32)

It is a mistake to think that the former always parallels traditional campus education and that the latter is necessarily nontraditional and innovative. Campuses can easily follow the latter and an extension school can easily adopt the university caricature.

Some of the tension has been the fault of proponents of the training model. Relevance and flexibility are not convincing arguments against the university caricature. At the risk of overgeneralization, some of them adopt elements of the degree-mill philosophies or would like to eliminate the degree system altogether. The academic camp also has extremists. Even if they hold that attitudinal development is important, they would not spend for-credit class time on it, and they cannot see how education could be good without a full research library. They choose to be right but irrelevant, and they are quick to point out the faults of the extremists of the other camp. It does not help that the university caricature has sometimes impregnated the philosophy of accreditation, demanding academic degrees and research libraries.

In these terms, it is easier to see that the extremes of either viewpoint are equally unacceptable. It is better to revert to a more conservative and accurate model that does not unnecessarily imply conflict.

**Scientists, Technologists, and Technicians**

Academic study and practical training give an appearance of fitting together well but they create a fundamental methodological tension.

A simple way to solve the problem is to differentiate between scientists, technologists, and technicians; it follows that each classification can get appropriate accreditation. Etymologically, *science* is a body of theoretical knowledge and really more closely approximates what is now called pure science. Scriven describes this type of approach as the "quest for knowledge" model. It carries out "pure" research, which sometimes unintentionally produces quite practical results. (1986:56)

*Technology* refers to a body of applied science and it assumes that some kinds of practical skills require scientific knowledge and innovative ability. Scriven helpfully describes research in this type of knowledge as the "improvement of practice" model, saying that it aims to solve problems for practitioners. (1986:56f) Barnett *et al.* (1987) present a model of professional preparation, showing that different professions have different views of the roles of degrees, the relationships between academics and professionals, and the roles of theory and practice.

A *technician* is a person who can carry out skills in which he has been trained. In other words, technical (or vocational) knowledge is like the training caricature and science is like the university caricature, with the technologist placed between the two. It is worth noting that science tends to favor the academic and cognitive curriculum models, while technical education leans toward a means-ends curriculum conceived mainly as a pattern of proficiencies.

For example, a mechanic is a technician. He can carry out a routine, like finding out why a car will not run and bolting on a new part to fix it. A technologist could apply theory to redesign the motor so that it would not have broken down in the first place. A scientist might look at the car, shrug, call a mechanic, and read a book about combustible molecules while waiting.

Theological programs fit the same categories. A student doing simple ministry studies is learning to be a technician, while someone learning associated intellectual skills is a technologist. The theological theoretician is a scientist.

Differentiating between these categories is not always easy. Many programs emphasize one but include elements of another, especially the technological which easily tends to drift toward one of the others.

Quite inaccurately, the scientific model appears "traditional" and the technological model appears "innovative." In much the same way, these three categories carry different levels of academic prestige. A program gains academic prestige by moving from technical to technological, or from technological to scientific. In the language of academia, this is "raising standards," which is not at all accurate as it says nothing about standards or whether graduates are better suited to do what they are trained to do. For similar reasons, the opposite movement between categories loses prestige. This has the particularly unfortunate consequence that technical education easily appears somehow inferior. In fact, it is far better suited to some contexts, and even socio-economically higher and academically advanced students are keen to learn skill which they perceive to be useful skills.

**Nomenclature and the Creation of New Degrees**

Nomenclature is the normal shorthand for representing the meaning of a degree, and despite its conservatism, it is an important part of classifying programs.

The most common degree levels in the English-speaking world are Certificate, Associate, Diploma, Bachelor, Bachelor with honors, Master, and Doctor; there are of course many others. A general classification follows, often (but not always) the name of a university faculty (Arts, Law, Science, Applied Science, Theology, Ministry, etc). This element now increasingly reflects a faculty other than that in which the degree is taken; the B.A. and M.A. are increasingly generalist degrees available, for example, in education and theology. Often the next element is the major area of study which makes the degree name more specific; it becomes "Bachelor of Science (Biology)" or "Master of Arts in Biblical Literature". A degree with a double major might be "Bachelor of Arts in History and Linguistics."

Changes in nomenclature can reflect changes of degree meaning. In North America, the graduate Bachelor of Divinity became the Master of Divinity and the graduate Bachelor of Law became the Juris Doctor. The names of degree levels changed while still representing the same learning; they now signify culmination or accumulation of education rather than a higher academic step in the same discipline.

A more difficult issue is that schools want the freedom to create new degrees. Accreditors are forced to give some scope for each school to experiment and to create new areas of study. Private accreditors cannot forbid schools to do so, despite the need to guard against an unnecessary profusion of confusing titles. Bear (1980:14, 16) notes that there are over three hundred Bachelor's degree titles, and over five hundred different doctoral titles, and the unfortunate trend is to increase their number. It does not help that some equivalent degrees

mean much the same, like the Master of Theological Studies and the M.A. in Theology, or the Bachelor of Biblical Studies and the Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies.

British research programs keep the number of degree titles to a minimum while virtually creating new degrees for every student. As thesis topics are so specific, and as the thesis and its defense is the only requirement other than entry prerequisites, the degree is on a unique topic. Schools may accept thesis proposals if they can adequately supervise and evaluate the research project, which usually means within their specializations. The degree itself is usually very generic, (Bachelor of Philosophy, Master of Philosophy, Master of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Theology, Doctor of Philosophy) so students may sometimes use thesis titles to indicate the area of study, despite its extreme specialization.

A school should not create a new, different type of degree and call it a Bachelor of Theology if the meaning of that degree is already fixed as an arbitrary convention. A school can choose which classifications it finds suitable as long as they are consistent with the definitions of the level. By using classifications to define degree levels (Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor, Master, etc.), accreditors can provide guidelines for the creation of degrees. For example, definitions of a Bachelor degree can fit a Bachelor of Theology, a Bachelor of Biblical Studies, a Bachelor of Arts in Theology, a Bachelor of Arts in Bible, and a Bachelor of Ministry.

The accreditor can then explain their relationship to other categories, which can affect them radically. For example, a postprofesional Bachelor has more in common with a postprofessional Master than a professional Bachelor.

**Relationships Between Classifications**

As conventions, particular classifications almost always co-occur in various degrees. Scientific degrees always have ways for capable graduates to continue to higher degrees.

Technical education in many countries goes no higher than a diploma. In some countries, the difference between a three-year diploma and a degree of the same length is classification; the diploma is technical while the degree is at least technological, even if it includes large skill components. (Ramsey, 1978:214f) ATA made an unfortunate exception when it defined a Bachelor of Theology in TEE as technical, probably because the Singapore ATA consultation was so committed to a training caricature.

The mosaic is complex; some certificate programs are clearly simple technical training, while others are the first two years of a degree program. Professions also come in levels, most particularly scientific, technical and vocational.

The role of classification is considerably reflected in nomenclature. For example, a Bachelor of Theology program might be scientific or technological, but a Bachelor of Ministry program is only technological with a strong skills element. The Master of Divinity in North America is a practitioner degree, quite unlike the Master of Theology.

**Conclusion**

In summary, a degree can be defined using the following classifications: conception of degrees, literacy skills, information systems, delivery systems, nomenclature, terminality, professionality and whether it is scientific, technological or technical. One further problem relating particularly to degree meaning is the problem of degree mills, the topic of the next chapter.

# 16
# DEGREE MILLS

Any study of accreditation must confront the problem of degree mills, schools whose academic requirements are so low that students do not earn their degrees in any normal sense. Most of their motives are obviously suspect. The following characteristics occur often in Bear's review (1980):

1. Diplomas are for sale with no academic requirements.
2. The school is primarily a means of avoiding personal tax.
3. The school depends on legal laxity or loopholes for its existence and operation.
4. Academic requirements are nominal and the school often teaches by correspondence.
5. Some create their own accreditors, not to regulate quality but to give the impression of credibility.
6. Many, perhaps most, are institutionally unstable.
7. Teaching staff, if they have credentials, often get them from degree mills.
8. They are overly generous in awarding honorary degrees.
9. Many have poor or non-existent accountability procedures.

Other characteristics, however, are more attractive to the nontraditional education movement:

10. They often criticize traditional education, particularly for teaching by lecture.
11. They give higher degrees for applied skills with little theoretical knowledge (or even none at all).
12. Some are very generous in giving credit for life and work experience. The problems are whether the school thoroughly evaluates experience and whether the knowledge is appropriate for the degree given.
13. Some defend their programs by saying that students study relatively little material but master it very thoroughly.
14. Some criticize traditional accreditors, defending themselves by claiming to be "innovative." This argument is only valid when accreditation is only available for scientific programs or is based on rigid process criteria.
15. Many do not give fixed street addresses, giving instead post office boxes or mail-forwarding services. Often this means they are administered from personal homes or temporarily rented offices. There is nothing wrong in using a post office box or rented premises; the question is whether the "school" will disappear overnight without discharging its commitments to its students.

Perhaps a more significant issue is the way some schools try to justify their programs with behavioral objectives. There need be no doubt that products are a means of justifying nontraditional education. If product definitions are clear and justifiable (given the considerations of program feedback), then the means can take many valid accreditable forms as long as they are consistent with the ends. However, some questionable schools claim to achieve the

same results as time-based schools in less time by using "more efficient means." They then hope to prove equivalency by using behavioral objectives which they say are comparable to those of time-based schools. Their chief complaint is that time-based traditional schools artificially fill up time with busywork. (*Cf. e.g.*, Hefferlin, 1974:148; Warren, 1974:145)

The real issue is short-cutting, not time usage; such schools invite the suspicion that they are not fully equivalent to accreditable schools. It can be true that the unusually intelligent, or those with long experience, or who learnt the same thing by practicum do not need to spend the full allotment of study time. However, the average course work student really needs at least the same time and effort as a traditional student to achieve just as much, or he is almost certainly on a short-cut. Accredited schools which use objectives do not use them as an excuse to lower their time totals. (See the appendix on credit for further discussion.)

**Lightweight Programs**

Modern degree-level accreditation has not adequately faced the problem that internal consistency as a criterion lets schools become lightweight. Lightweight programs are typically well-organized, the staff feel they are doing a good job, and the students are satisfied that they are learning something worthwhile. In short, the stakeholders agree that they are accreditable.

In general, these programs are highly functional but lack content; students simply learn less that their degree signifies. Accreditors might justifiably shy away from them. The degree has changed meaning, and in this case, "different" means "devalued." TEE has faced this danger because it often deliberately works outside traditional education and has sought to develop (or sometimes rationalize) its own standards.

Degrees need their correct labels (*cf.* Spurr, 1970:7), and lightweight degrees are mislabeled goods. For example, a hypothetical school set up a very good short program for junior high school graduates; it went well until they wrote "Bachelor of Arts" on the diplomas. In the same way, a mislabeled M.A. might be a good graduate B.A.

The problem is necessarily vague; there is no distinct boundary between a weak but accreditable program and an unaccreditable program. Part of the problem is that lightweightness is equal and opposite to elitist education, which overly restricts access to study. In this case, the standards are so low that weak students can still pass. The problem is more complex than that, especially as the impression of lightweight-ness can be misleading. Public education differs widely between countries, so the value-added effect means that some countries' degree programs will validly have less content that others. Another false impression is cultural. Even if some aspects of culturally Western information are nearly valueless in some non-Western cultures, its conspicuous absence can make a program appear weak.

Moreover, nontraditional curriculum models and delivery systems can be misleading. Some nontraditional schools look weak no matter how good they are. A new school would not readily inspire confidence if it did not have large offices, was not an instructional institution, and gave specialized practitioner degrees. Similarly, a PI text can look much easier than it really is, especially when many frames require short answers. On the other hand, a long list of objectives has a smokescreen effect. It is easy make weak programs appear strong by writing impressively long lists of atomistic objectives that appear to represent a great deal more content than they actually do. It is also easy to defend the lists by appealing to the values of clarified purposes. However, the lists have a smokescreen effect because they hide how little students really learn. Some early PI writers admitted that they taught only a little of the most urgently necessary knowledge but felt that mastery was adequate compensation.

A less acceptable excuse for lightweight-ness is theological position. For example, two hypothetical seminaries in the same city offered degrees at the same level. One belongs to a mainstream denomination with a long Calvinistic tradition and with many university graduates in its membership. The other belongs to a small, new charismatic denomination with a largely undecided theology, an emphasis on enthusiastic ministry, and a poorly educated membership. Most likely the first will have far more content and be more accreditable than the second.

In the past, process accreditors simply passed a judgment based on the opinions of the visiting evaluation team, souring relationships between accreditors and schools, and inviting criticisms of "private club." Other chapters propose a variety of mutually compatible solutions. Lightweight-ness is a classification issue because the degree title does not suit the classifications of the program, and it is a consensus issue because it involves standards decided by inter-school consensus. That this problem occurs at all is good reason for accreditors to maintain some leverage in evaluation decisions.

# 17
# EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Objectives are one of the main ways to describe what educators want students to learn. The actual idea of objectives is not at stake; almost all teachers conceive of objectives and most use them to describe what they want students to learn. The main question is whether goals should be specific and perhaps behavioral, or whether they may be general or vague. The issue is important because the literature on behavioral objectives has greatly influenced the nontraditional education movement. Unfortunately, the discussion is mostly a well-worn path with far more debate than consensus.

A good approach to objectives has a great deal to offer accreditation. A satisfactory role for objectives gets around weaknesses in the product idea of quality and accreditation, such as filtering objectives through a necessarily vague statement of institutional mission. Admittedly, a list of objectives can only represent program realities when it is tempered by considerable program feedback about how they were interpreted, how well they represented the real aims, how well they worked, and what changes were made during implementation. (*Cf.* Cronbach, 1980:5) This makes the information base far more complex than a simple list of objectives.

Even with such encumbrances, however, a list of well-written objectives is the best way to show what type and level of learning students have achieved. It also goes a long way to demonstrating program validity beyond reasonable doubt, and to being accountable for learning. When program objectives give an idea of content, they are the best way to find out what a particular degree really means, and the fewer the objectives, the easier it becomes. The simplest possible case is the graduate research institute degree.

The idea of objectives makes the same worthy assumptions as the product view of quality. It assumes purposiveness, and that educators can articulate purposes. The idea of effability is central to its epistemology, especially in the relationship between language and referent. It also assumes that purposes are to be realized, and this need not necessarily imply behaviorism. (*Cf.* Kelly, 1977:25)

By incorporating cognitivism, objectives can still use the best lessons of behaviorism without becoming victims to its excesses. For example, behavioral indicators in objectives are still very helpful, although one should not over-rely on them. Objectives are a good servant but a poor master (*cf.* Print, 1987:26).

Objectives are a meeting point between content and functionality, because they need to represent both the knowledge learned and its purposes. That is, objectives need to be concrete enough for accreditors to use without compromising the real vagaries of what students need to learn. The teleological nature of objectives, however, tends to favor the interests of functionality rather than content. This chapter also delimits the valid range of options, emphasizing a proposed "ideal" option.

The obvious options are the soft and the hard. On the hard side, the very extensive literature on behavioral objectives has seemed monolithic. This is completely deceptive, because the philosophy of objectives fits into two distinct categories; the very hard and the middle road. In practice, schools can blend the two types and learn to live with the contradictions, but this is quite unnecessary.

**The Soft End of the Spectrum**

Although attitudes are changing, traditional higher education, as is well known, has often been antagonistic toward the philosophy of behavioral objectives, mainly because it identifies them with simple knowledge. This end of the spectrum clearly emphasizes content, conceived as complex knowledge. Educational goals are either very general or ontological (specifying only areas of knowledge for students to master). Proponents hold that educational aims are very complex or even ineffable. This has brought about the not irresponsible view that only experts really know what they aim to achieve. Consequently, aims are general, perhaps even vague, and they rely on tacit knowledge, a consensus view of quality, and a rather soft epistemology.

Ironically enough, this approach does not help teachers to impart simple information to students, and in its extreme forms, knowledge becomes ethereal and intangible. In the extreme, nobody can accurately explain what he is really trying to do. If this view has the misfortune to inherit the weaknesses of complex knowledge, it at least has the fortune to also inherit all its strengths.

Interactive models of teaching are common, and they are considerably defined as much by a rejection of objectives as by an emphasis on learning processes.

Stenhouse (n.d.) is a good example of an epistemologically soft view. He rejects the idea of performance objectives, and suggests that a process model of curriculum is most appropriate if students are to understand the deep structures of the knowledge they are taught. He suggests that most of the important aspects of education relate to the process of learning rather than to products, for example, the abilities to formulate questions, to search for information that will produce answers, and to discuss and reflect. (Based on Hanly *et al.*, 1970:5) Kelly is another example of similar school of thought (1977; esp. pp. 40, 44), as are almost all humanists.

**Atomistic Objectives: The Hard View**

This approach teaches that it is always preferable to articulate important learning goals, and to express everything that students should learn in behavioral objectives. Unfortunately, this normally means compiling long lists of small objectives, hence the name "atomistic objectives." Almost by definition, it only teaches simple knowledge. It is epistemologically very hard in that it tends to equate a linguistic expression (the objective) with learning (its referent).

These objectives aim to predetermine every detail of what students will learn, and almost all correct answers. In PI, this means that guide answers clearly either affirm a correct student response or reveal a definite error. Evaluation is similarly objective. In keeping with its determinist viewpoint, every detail of the teaching must aim exclusively at the prescribed objectives.

This view identifies evaluation activities with understanding and knowledge, holding that the latter is meaningless without a behavioral manifestation, even if it is an artificially contrived evaluation exercise.

Atomistic objectives typically specify only the product (the final behavior), and avoid mentioning the process (the way students should learn). Teaching is thus completely distinct from evaluation, and teachers frequently stop teaching to evaluate students on each and every objective.

Tyler's view of curriculum (1949) and Mager's small book (1962; *cf.* Popham, 1975:47), itself written in PI, have been the most influential statements on behavioral objectives, but neither were clearly atomists. Others have been more extreme in their advocacy of atomism. In Texas, for example, a teacher of first grade with twenty-five students was responsible to ensure the achievement of 150 objectives per student, resulting in over 3,500 objectives through the year (Ferrarra, 1987:17).

*Strengths*. Atomistic objectives have some important strengths, and are preferable, even necessary, for some types of learning. It would be unfortunate if their most useful lessons were forgotten during a change to a better approach. They have a strong base in empirical studies and they are still the best way to define particular knowledge and skills for use in measurement. They are useful in evaluating learning done apart from a study program--students who learned exactly the same information elsewhere should still be able to pass examinations which are based on well-written objectives.

In a variation called "direct teaching", a dominant classroom teacher teaches behavioristically in small steps. According to Ornstein, students taught this way consistently perform better in standardized tests than those taught in more interactive, humanistic styles. (1987:90f q.v.)

Well-written atomistic objectives are also still the best way to teach applied skills, and are often well-suited to teaching the poorly educated. They are also very good for complex work that still can use predetermined answers (*e.g.*, Markle, 1969). No accreditor could justifiably call this standard of learning into question.

*Weaknesses*. Almost all curriculum texts contain long lists of faults of behavioral objectives, although almost all only apply to those which tend to atomism. At the very least, the lists of problems show that accreditors cannot oblige schools to use them. The following incomplete list includes only those weaknesses mostly directly related to accreditation:

Some weakness relate to the teaching-learning process. First, too many objectives are poorly written yet so much depends on them, especially in PI. It is not that PI lacks the potential to teach extremely well, but that it so seldom does so. Writers and teachers can too easily consider things not worth learning if they do not know how to write atomistic objectives for them. Second, objectives dictate exactly what should happen in learning process but easily create boring instruction which centers on the objectives as much on the students. Third, Popham, reflecting back on the "heyday of behavioral objectives", notes that teachers with myriads of tiny objectives tend to ignore them all. A very small number of essential skills which subsume other skills is by far preferable. (Popham, 1987:680) Fourth, atomistic objectives are impossible to use for some kinds of learning because they predetermine answers. Examples include systematic reflection on experience, learning that starts with a problem to be solved, or learning where the student must take the initiative in identifying a problem. (Boud, 1986:240.) Fifth, some kinds of objectives not only predetermine what the student will learn, but also limit the amount of teaching available. This impedes the natural progress of students who can study more than that which is deliberately taught. (Also Brady, 1983:83)

The use of predetermined answers also creates problems. It subscribes to a fairly rigid form of behaviorism and as such easily becomes indoctrination. Every "correct" answer is predetermined and students may not think creatively. It assumes that expert author-teachers are infallible, although they really only have well-informed opinions and often disagree with each other. The approach can only work for basic information where experts can form a consensus, or when each alternative expert view is equally valid.

Even its concept of quality is suspect. Atomism is closely akin to metricism, because evaluation based on atomistic objectives tends to reduce knowledge to numbers. (*Cf.* Sadler, 1987:198)

Atomistic objectives lack several important strengths of cognitivism. For example, some students can satisfactorily perform the evaluation activities without feeling confident that they understand the material. In other cases, they can successfully perform procedural skills without understanding nor conceptualizing what they are really doing. Comprehension is valuable apart from skills; behavioristic learning theory is not always adequate. Not only that, students do not really understand objectives until they have learnt how to achieve them. The issue, however, is not so much that students need a detailed knowledge of the objective before starting, but that they are fully aware of what they are trying to do. (Houle: 1978:172)

Nextly, objectives have difficulties fulfilling one of their most basic expectations. One defining element of objectives is that objectives should include (or at least imply) criteria to distinguish between correct and incorrect answers. However, they can seldom, if ever, be completely explicit. Many objectives require students to differentiate between examples and non-examples, but the objectives cannot describe how fine the differentiation should be. Usually field-testing, not objectives, shows what is workable. Mostly this is no more than a small chink in theoretical armor, but it means that objectives have a built-in devaluation system. In practice, it becomes easy to justify poor learning because the same objectives function in exactly the same way for very easy differentiations. Moreover, some subjects are so complex that atomistic objectives cannot realistically mention every criteria of correctness. For example, it takes whole books to explain what makes a satisfactory essay. Staff would normally be justified in failing a paper that was badly substandard in only one vital aspect of content, logic, methodology, structure, presentation, or referencing. Teachers cannot predetermine what students will write, and teachers cannot even predetermine the rules for the "deep" features (ideas, organization, choice of words and style). (*E.g.*, Sadler 1987:199f; Philips, 1982)

Atomistic objectives also presuppose a flawed epistemology. By limiting knowledge to that which is simple, atomism discourages higher level thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). Knowledge is static, sometimes even sterile; its rigid structures discourage students from interrelating ideas fluidly and dynamically. In practice, writing objectives for higher order thinking skill almost never occurs. (Popham, 1987:685; Barnett, 1988b:21) Accreditation agencies could justifiably withhold accreditation to degree programs if students are seriously deficient in complex thinking skills. Bracey gives a most lucid example of atomism and simple knowledge. College students copied short answers from texts to answer study guide questions, then took multiple-choice tests which also presumed that students' learnings were extremely fragmented. (1987:684, based on Richardson, 1985)

Ferrarra's criticism of atomistic, behavioristic objectives is particularly cutting, adding to the already extensive lists of problems with objectives. Her complaint is that preoccupation with objectives makes classroom teaching almost impossible. For example, a lesson based on an objective seldom fully achieves the objective because students need practice and review. Similarly, the sum of the skills is not the mastery of the subject (1987:16); a finite number of simple, static particulars does not make a complex, dynamic whole. In much the same way, the more objectives in a program, the more likely it is that each objective is trivial and represents content not worth learning. (*Cf.* Popham, 1987:680; Bracey, 1987:685f) Dressel mentions the related problem of the number of important outcomes always exceeding the number of conscious objectives (1976:30). That is, the whole is more complex than the sum of its identified, articulated particulars. Houle points out the difference between the symbol and its referent; he notes that the written form of an objective is no more than an abstract formulation of the knowledge that students will hopefully learn. (1978:147) Facing these epistemological problems, it comes as no surprise, then, that translating knowledge into behaviorally-stated objectives often distorts the deep structure of knowledge. (Stenhouse, n.d.:182; *cf.* McKinney, 1982:6f, based on Ausebel, 1968)

**Didactic Objectives: The Middle Ground**

In order to sharpen the contrast with atomistic objectives, the term *didactic objectives* is coined here. Where the former acts like little fences shutting in some facts, the latter views objectives as a core around which information can cluster. If atomistic objectives are like the individual pixels that make a picture, didactic objectives are more like sweeping brushstrokes that make up a painting.

Didactic objectives give priority to qualitative student learning over behavior. The essence of writing them is to accurately conceive of what it is that students should learn; only then can one consider appropriate indicators. In doing so, it restores content to a more central role in objectives, but not at the expense of functionality.

A *product of history*. The distinction between atomistic and didactic objectives is a useful historical tool to interpret the literature on behavioral objectives.

Didactic objectives date back at least to Tyler (1949) who wrote mainly with classroom teaching in mind. It is true that his work could be interpreted as strictly behavioristic, and he believed statements of general aims, teacher's activities, or content topics were inadequate (p. 44f). However, he was primarily concerned with producing small lists of important objectives that would help teachers in selecting learning experiences and planning instruction (pp. 43, 47). Rather naturally, the idea of didactic objectives has survived mostly in the teacher-training rather than in the theoretical-behavioral literature. The rigid educational behaviorism of the 1960s and 1970s pressed atomistic behaviorism to its limits and found its inherent faults. (See Popham, 1975:46-48 for more detail.)

Criticisms of atomistic behaviorism are not at all new. According to Kelly, Taba in 1962 saw objectives as developmental, as paths to travel rather than destinations. Kelly goes on to mention Eisner's 1969 concept of expressive objectives, which required students to express themselves but did not predetermine what students should learn; Eisner also noted how it was important for higher order thinking. It is not surprising then that Kelly sought a looser conception of objectives. (1977:40f) In 1976, Dressel had mentioned how many objectives reflect processes, had said that several kinds of possible response are better than only one, and had recommended small numbers of complex objectives (pp. 47, 51).

A year earlier, Popham, then a fervent supporter of behavioral objectives, had started to turn away from their extreme forms:

1. He said that commitment to behavioral objectives is not the same as commitment to mechanistic psychological behaviorism (1975:49).
2. Long lists of small goals contained trivial knowledge; it was better for an objective to refer to a generalizable class of responses than to refer to only one (p. 51).
3. He allowed "constructed responses" such as essays, where answers were not predetermined. The objective contained criteria for assessing student responses, and he mentioned that it could not mention all relevant criteria (p. 51f).
4. He differentiated between identical answers that were based on different cognitive processes. For example, a memorized deduction differs from one that the student forms himself (p. 53f).
5. There are good reasons for using a small number of generalized, profound goals (p. 138).

Atomistic behavioral objectives have succeeded in staying fashionable in some circles; many of the criticisms above are relatively recent. The present trend, however, is away from them. What is new is the emerging possibility of a centrist consensus that prefers didactic objectives. The consequences are important because the centrist conception becomes a consistent framework that includes both simple and complex information, both particularistic and holistic learning. This philosophy of objectives encompasses all the applied skills strengths of atomistic objectives while mostly avoiding their weaknesses. It is also much more flexible in terms of curriculum models and its view of quality.

One of the most interesting studies is that of Sadler (1987). He criticizes criterion-based objectives, apparently presuming them to be atomistic. He lists as a weakness the way that they are used to produce numerical grades with artificial cut-off points to rank students or differentiate between passing and failing. He sees the process as bureaucratic and overly dependent on statistical solutions (p. 192). That is, he sees their weakness as the use of quantitative methods to evaluate learning, a view that is analogous to quantitative program evaluation. It might then be wiser to delineate between qualitative and quantitative assessment than to try to reject the entire literature on quantitative assessment.

It is predictable, then, that Sadler prefers qualitative evaluation. He suggests the idea of standards, and his definition is distinguishable from criterion-referenced learning only as long as criteria are conceived as quantitative. When criteria are conceived qualitatively, however, his concept of standards is actually a helpful guide to formulating them.

**Practical Implications for Writing Objectives**

If the above discussion was largely theoretical, it makes implications for writing objectives. The following list suggests ways to overcome common mistakes in TEE texts. Many of them are in some ways particularly important to accreditation, such as complex knowledge and content.

*Helpfulness to teachers and learners*. Without unduly dominating the process, objectives should help teachers to teach and students to learn. Objectives fail when they do not do so.

*Complex knowledg*e. First, as knowledge is intrinsically more complex than a list of objectives, it is admittedly impossible to specify all learning goals beforehand. Consequently, the use of objectives should allow incidental learning. This also frees teaching from a strict "needs--only" mindset. Even in the 1960s, the PI movement moved toward in this direction; in 1969, Markle's programmed book used enrichment material, that is, extra explanatory information which was not necessary to work PI frames.

Second, the re-expressiblity of knowledge has ramifications for objectives. Objectives must test real knowledge, not just what the student knows about the textbook author's viewpoint. For example, an author who requires students to recall four characteristics of good pastoral visitation has arbitrarily interpreted the subject as four fixed characteristics. This is static, simple knowledge. Yet many experts could express their knowledge of the complex reality of the subject matter as quite different characteristics. They might insist that there are three or five or ten of them, and would unnecessarily fail the test. Finding this problem in a pre-test defeats its whole purpose because it is almost impossible to guess what the author's opinion will be. Finding it in teaching materials shows that students only get the author's viewpoint and do not get access to any deeper dynamic that explains different interpretations.

This especially applies to teaching complex skills. Dividing a large, complex skill into smaller component skills can exclude other ways of accomplishing the same complex skill. These component objectives might fit well in a teaching context, but they do not necessarily help in evaluating people who learned how to carry out the large complex skill using different component skills.

Consequently, students must sometimes create a variety of original answers, all of which may be correct. Predetermined answers are inappropriate; objectives require criteria for evaluating student responses.

*Judgments using tacit knowledge*. Objectives, like complex knowledge, can have fuzzy edges, so evaluation sometimes depends on the teacher's tacit knowledge rather than mechanical checks against predetermined answers. Although criteria are objective, they are too numerous and too complexly interrelated for teachers to apply them simply and mechanically.

Being less like a straightjacket does not mean that objectives are unstable descriptions of learning. Like any tool, the people who use it determine how effective it can be. For example, some objectives do not have predetermined answers but quite validly use criteria for judging student responses. Teachers can then devalue objectives by reinterpreting the criteria so that they are too demanding or not demanding enough. Nevertheless, this always happens in any system; even in strictly behavioristic PI, writers can require very easy predetermined responses.

*Content*. By emphasizing complex knowledge and the means to express it and evaluate it, didactic objectives restore higher level thinking skills to their correct place.

Objectives should represent and accurately conceive real content with its real vagaries and complexities, which higher education sees as important. Objectives can describe in words the properties of the kind of performance expected from students, and even include examples and highly abstract criteria. (*Cf.* Sadler 199ff *q.v.*) In this way, objectives can utilize epistemologically soft qualitative judgments based on complex tacit knowledge.

Not every detail of necessary knowledge needs to appear in a list of objectives. Instead, objectives can offer criteria as to what information will be suitable, and students can then be free to find their own information in books or in the field. It is in this sense that objectives can be cores for clusters of information.

Otherwise, objectives should in some way refer to the content they aim to teach. The objective, "The student will recall and write six principles of interpreting apocalyptic writings." does not really represent what the lesson will teach. The student could honestly pass with any six principles, and many lists of objectives are meaningless because they make this kind of mistake. Fortunately, this problem tends to occur less often in objectives requiring higher thinking skills.

*Processes*. Many objectives can mention learning processes. It can be very beneficial that they do so, and they are often implied anyway. For example, an objective that requires students to write a report refers not only to a product (the report with its associated learning) but also represents the learning process (the research and writing component).

Some objectives are clearer if they briefly mention the learning activity, not just the end product. For example, "The student will write a 1,500 word essay based on library research ..." or, "After reading the two texts on hermeneutics …" Besides being clearer, these objectives imply something about the time effort needed to complete the task. This contrasts with "pure" objectives which only measure the product (what the student knows) and do not mention the learning process; that is, process and product need not always be rigidly separated.

*Small numbers of complex objectives*. Objectives must be few in number. Course-work subjects with myriads of tiny objectives frustrate program evaluators and teachers, and it is questionable whether students take much notice of them. In most cases, writers of study materials should structure lessons to achieve just a few ultimate complex objectives. Consequently, evaluation is less but often more complex. This is economy of objectives, meaning the fewer the items of information the better. (Drusan, 1979:98, based on Bruner, 1966:44) Using a smaller

number of key concepts can reduce pressure on students to memorize by rote, so evaluation becomes more closely linked to real learning.

*Indicators*. Although objectives always include behavioral indicators, performing specific activities can be different from knowing and understanding. Consequently, different activities can test what is essentially the same knowledge. Moreover, objectives need clear indicators to distinguish performance levels. A Certificate in Theology graduate and a Doctor of Ministry graduate might both become pastors of churches. How does one tell that the D.Min. graduate preaches a higher quality expository sermon?

Similarly, when performance is not an absolute pass-fail distinction, the objective should have criteria for qualitative grading. The objective, "The student will write a two thousand word essay evaluating B. B. Warfield's contribution to bibliology." only asks the student to do the task and implies that doing the essay would be enough to pass, regardless of its quality. It should have included a grading system for essays, even if its interpretation depends on the tacit knowledge of the teacher.

# 18
# TAXONOMY OF OBJECTIVES

Earlier sections mentioned literacy skills, compared simple and complex knowledge styles, and differentiated between atomistic and didactic objectives. A good way to illustrate these relationships is through Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive objectives.

Bloom's taxonomy is a set of classifications of cognitive educational objectives primarily based on types of thinking ("processing") skills. Educators have conceptualized thinking skills in different ways; Newmann (1988:59) lists ten major kinds. It would be interesting and worthwhile to create a generic model covering all these conceptualizations, which is what Newmann hoped to do. Yet like Newmann, it is hard to avoid following Bloom's taxonomy, which is one of the most successful of them all and is a ready framework for any generic model. A major reason for this is that Bloom's taxonomy relates to any task expressible in language, even if it requires the students to identify what needs to be done.

As a taxonomy, it was originally intended to be a descriptive and orderly set of classifications that would encompass various kinds of educational objectives. Educators could then see any set of objectives as part of a whole, that is, as part of a consistent theory of learned information. Although it appears to be a set of generic objectives of education, it is really no more than an attempt to produce a generic set of process skills. It was not intended to be prescriptive and is seldom easy to use as a guide to formulating objectives. Even when it is a helpful guide, it stifles the creation of divergent styles.

Nevertheless, it has a lot to offer accreditors. Its main value in accreditation is in enabling accreditors and teachers to better understand the kinds of knowledge students should have, and to be better able to discuss and classify them according to known degree requirements. It is especially important to find out whether students learn at levels above memorization, and if so, at what level. Popham notes that it tends to focus on "internal, unobservable" behaviors, and is essentially cognitive. The cognitive aspect does not make it easy to categorize specific behaviors. (1975:57) Tyler's early support for the use of objectives was specifically to avoid unintentional over-dependence on rote memory, which contributed to the empty typewriter syndrome. (Tyler, 1983:68) It does not really matter that most teachers will not write copious amounts of objectives or constantly refer to the taxonomy, as long as they can show that students learn at desired levels. In referring to objectives, the taxonomy assumes that students must do something to show what they have learned and must master a body of content and be able to apply it.

### Its History

Despite being published in 1956, it has survived many critiques and stayed in much the same form. Bloom *et al.* published another major book in 1971, but Bloom made no major changes to his opinion, being content to define the levels more precisely and specify classes of objectives at each level. The 1956 version is still the standard work. This is not to say it has

not undergone some major changes at the hand of others. The main levels in a more advanced version (based on Gaddis, 1984), are outlined as follows:

1. Remember single concepts. (Most basic level)
2. Understand single concepts.
3. Able to apply single concepts.
4. Able to analyze, that is, identify the principles and issues common to a class of related concepts.
5. Able to put those principles into a new form.
6. Able to evaluate those principles. (Highest level)

Remembering was more than rote (Bloom, 1956:28f, 78) and involved some re-expression. As in an ordinary examination, the students' answers did not need exactly the same wording as taught in class although the content was basically the same. Consequently, Bloom could arrange a useful hierarchy of objectives at knowledge level. However, when the taxonomy is applied to a large number of small, simple objectives (especially atomistic objectives) this type of knowledge too easily degenerates into rote, and comprehension-level exercises become more important. Consequently, teachers (especially PI writers) can omit most memory exercises and move directly to the lowest level of understanding (recognizing a concept in a different manifestation, or creating a new manifestation of given concept).

Bloom also included two kinds of application. The first was on-the-job skill and practical problem-solving. The other was the ability to use a single concept as a variable to manipulate theoretical information to which the student had never been exposed. (*Cf.* pp. 122-124)

Bloom's original view of evaluation was fairly simple; his highest sub-level was judgments using external criteria, which only evaluated single, teacher-generated concepts with reference to their class of concepts. Unlike those who followed him, he did not ask students either to evaluate student-extrapolated principles common to a generic class, nor to take the initiative in defining the generic class, nor to develop criteria independently. Bloom was reluctant to say that evaluation was the highest level of thought, for above it lies the acquisition of new knowledge, a process which involves many levels in the taxonomy (p. 185).

In practice, learning activities can start at the most basic level with a concept or group of principles and work upwards drilling the student with learning exercises at each level. Although the hierarchy does not predetermine how complex the component concepts will be, the higher levels are more advanced.

**Solving Its Problems**

The taxonomy has some weaknesses. It inherits many of the weaknesses of the product view of quality and is susceptible to the weakness of atomistic objectives. It also allows various interpretations; one of the most important ambiguities is whether one sees it as referring to either simple or complex knowledge. At the highest levels even more than the others, each school needs to interpret the terminology of higher-level objectives similarly. After all, what is "significant original thought", or "an original contribution to knowledge", or "a consistent philosophy of the subject"?

Bloom emphasized processing skills at the expense of other variables. One consequence of this is that the taxonomy became ambiguous as to the balance between processing skills and mastery of information, allowing students to go to the higher levels with barely adequate amounts of information.

Another kind of ambiguity is its dynamic dimension. From its inception and against its inventors' intentions, the taxonomy was dynamic, not monodimensional and static. Interpretation, for example, is normally an ability at understanding level, but it can sometimes become synonymous with analysis (p. 93). Translating something into a new form (a comprehension skill) can eventually become like synthesis, and application often requires some evaluation of the appropriateness of a new situation. Transferring application to a vastly removed situation is almost like synthesis. Using a set of steps to solve a problem (synthesis in Bloom's original taxonomy) is much like an application of principles. Although there is no obvious benefit in mapping these areas of overlap, an evaluator needs to know that the use of dimensions is a way of defining academic levels.

The taxonomy still does not clearly encompass all objectives. Its original form used only atomistic objectives, but it lends itself most readily to didactic objectives. (*Cf.* Dressel, 1976:44)

The idea of a taxonomy also faces an epistemological gap between the whole and the parts. It is easy to say that students must be able to think critically and creatively and communicate their thoughts coherently; this is the whole. However, it lacks an explanation of all its parts--the particular subcategories of objectives complete with concrete examples of each. It has not proved easy to build up a whole picture from examples of specific kinds of objectives; there are always more categories of examples or ways of conceptualizing thinking skills. Perhaps the best way would be to create various models and understand the relationships between them, a task outside the scope of the present work.

Making the taxonomy epistemologically softer has solved many of its earlier problems of atomism. Originally, all levels only applied to single concepts, but this has been modified. Only the three most basic levels can apply to simple statically-related concepts expressed in atomistic objectives which predetermine short, simple answers which students only have to identify.

In higher education, the taxonomy is often more useful when the three most basic levels use complex concepts and didactic objectives which allow students to provide complex answers. At levels above application, concepts and answers at the three upper levels can only be complex because students study a variety of viewpoints and must have some freedom to draw their own conclusions; teachers cannot predetermine answers.

**Several Other Modern Versions**

Hopkins and Richardson (1989) report a similar taxonomy for teaching critical thinking through distance education. Unlike Bloom's taxonomy, it is concerned with responses to complex information in the form of written critiques, and goes a long way to bridging the gap between taxonomical thought on one side and the established canons of critical thinking, formal logic, and classical rhetoric on the other. It has the added advantage of self-consciously using its steps in teaching. In greatly simplified form, their steps are:

1. "Determine what the author is talking about."
2. Determine whether the author is presenting an argument.
3. Analyze the argument.
4. Evaluate the argument.

That is, the first step is a variation on knowledge, the second is understanding, the third is analysis, and the fourth is evaluation.

Ballard and Clanchy (1984) formulated a simple taxonomy closely resembling that of Bloom. They identified one class of learning as efforts to reproduce existing knowledge and

included the first three levels in Bloom's taxonomy, with the important absence of the manipulation of theory sublevel. The next level, which they called "critical thinking," corresponds to Bloom's idea of evaluation and synthesis. The highest level is termed "speculative" and reflects the deliberate intention to extend knowledge by searching for new approaches and explanations (p. 12). They present cases to show that at least some cultures do not have the higher levels in their conceptions of education (p. 13f; Samuelowicz, 1987); the taxonomy is useful for understanding cultural learning styles.

In Bilbow's study (1989) based on the work of others, he accepts a distinction between tow kinds of learning. Surface learning is atomistic learning of simple information, and mostly refers to processing small bits of language and to memorization. Deep learning refers to meaning as complex wholes and the processing of information at discourse level. The two kinds are mutually exclusive for any one learning activity although students can switch from one to the other according to perceived need. (In terms of Bloom's taxonomy, this is the contrast between memorizing simple information and comprehending complex information.)

He mentions several factors that discourage deep learning, including memorization assignments, teaching styles, student stress, evaluation requirements, and inability in the language of instruction.

Bilbow goes on to say that comprehension can be built from the bottom up by building complex meanings from small bits of language, or from the top down by using background knowledge to predict and infer. Although effective understanding requires both top down and bottom up approaches, non-Western students depend "almost exclusively" on bottom up comprehension based on surface learning. (It may be significant that his study mainly refers to non-Western students studying in British universities.) Bilbow's study has some major consequences. It highlights the importance of complex information and implies that schools should ensure that students are deep-learning. It hints that a taxonomy should differentiate between complex wholes and sums of parts; learning all the parts is not the same as comprehending the complex whole. It also suggests that overemphasis on memorization makes students less capable of higher level learning.

**Student Responses**

The taxonomy needs further development, mainly in the form of added variables. For example, adding other dimensions would address the ambiguous imbalance between information and processing skills.

Any taxonomy must retain a separate dimension for degree of difficulty, because two objectives at the same taxonomic level can vary. Like the dynamic dimension, degree of difficulty is not quantifiable by distinct levels, except perhaps by using field-test statistics, a process too clumsy and detailed for accreditation purposes. Although this dimension does not help categorization, it is important because it is a mistake to equate easy and difficult learning tasks.

In the shortest answers, students only have to check a box or write a few words. Longer answers comprise several paragraphs or an undergraduate essay. The longest, most complex type of student response is the thesis, dissertation, or monograph. Difficult tasks often require more complex written responses, especially if objectives are didactic, or are at analysis level or above on the taxonomy, or require a more complex information base.

In the case of simple objectives, requiring students to identify a correct answer is not the same as requiring them to create an original answer. The difference is most obvious when students explore complex patterns of implications and or apply learning in concrete situations.

Whether this distinction is important in all cases is not yet known, but it is important in at least some. (Gaddis, 1984) The two kinds of response are not intrinsically alike, although in certain situations they can well be equivalent. The level of difficulty is a complicating factor; an easily-reached objective that requires an original answer can have equal teaching value to a more difficult objective requiring students only to identify an answer.

**Implications**

The taxonomy becomes important in defining degrees. Schools and accreditors can profitably distinguish between applying information practically in a new situation and using it to manipulate theory. A technician needs applied skills while scientific education might omit them and focus on manipulating theory. Not only that, technologists and scientists should function at all taxonomical levels, especially the highest three. Whether articulated in terms of the taxonomy or not, this distinction tends to be one of the main differences between non-degree and degree programs. An accreditor could quite conceivably be justified in withholding an accredited status from a program if it students failed to function at these levels.

Integrating all important dimensions and variables into the taxonomy would be useful for establishing theoretical consistency and perhaps for innovation. However, it would be too complicated and cumbersome to be called a model. For accreditation purposes, it is easier to use a simplified taxonomy and briefly to articulate any other variables separately.

The discussion example of an accreditation handbook contains possible variables, some of which are at least implied in Bloom's work, but the handbook is not necessarily comprehensive. Among others, thes variables include complex and dynamic knowdge, processing skills (thinking skills for responding to information), and mastery of written response.

In conclusion, Bloom's taxonomy provides a useful guide to student learning, and its shortcomings are not beyond remediation in a way that is useful for accreditors.

# 19
# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is possible to accredit schools with diverse program objectives, conceptions of quality, models of curricula, degree definitions, cultures, and delivery systems. Schools can legitimately diversify into a wide range of unique programs while still being responsibly accredited based on what students learn.

Institutionality remains a central issue. Present procedures are mostly adequate for checking the existence of a registered legal body and a board of governors, but many TEE schools have been institutionally unstable. In terms of educational innovation, schools may follow various organizational models but need identifiable accountability structures.

The following section reviewed the literature on educational quality, models of accreditation, and related program evaluation styles. It argued that no view is adequate in isolation. An evaluation model suitable for accreditation will use both means-ends evaluation and stakeholder consensus. Despite appearances, these two approaches are best seen as interdependent.

The final major section discussed classification, that is, the way accreditors can identify and classify programs, and suggested some classifications pertinent to accreditation, such as kind of degree, nomenclature, the level of professionalism, kinds of information, and the level and role of thinking skills. Most importantly, categories which may justifiably co-occur are not those which are normally expected in "traditional" education.

Consequently, it can be seen that accreditation comprises institutionality, classification, means-ends consistency, and emergent agreement between stakeholders. Both hard and soft epistemologies are necessary. Put together, these elements make a consistent model of accreditation.

# APPENDIX: CREDIT

Many American-style accreditors use credit totals to describe degrees as if they were integral to the accreditation process. However, credit is only a side issue in accreditation.

A credit is a measure of the entire study time it takes for the average passing student with ordinary entry prerequisites to do passing work when working to capacity. By nature, it is not a precise measure, being subject to variations in individual work habits and ability, differences in standards for passing work, and the vagaries of "average" and "capacity." In the past, nontraditional educators have criticized the idea of filling up time but have not mentioned working to capacity. Bear even used competency (as opposed to time usage) as a descriptor of nontraditional education. (1980:9)

The semester hour is the most common example of a credit system. Although particular definitions vary slightly from place to place, a semester hour comprises one fifty-minute or sixty-minute period of class work each week for fifteen or sixteen weeks, plus the same amount of time in assigned study, and the same amount again in independent study. This time total includes examinations and preparation for them. The total time for the semester hour is then usually divided into three equal parts. At least in theory, the school must provide the full amount of time, but need only account for how the students use time in class and assigned study. A quarter hour consists of the same time usage for only ten weeks, making it two thirds of a semester hour.

**Credit: A Side Issue**

In the history of higher education, credits are a relative latecomer. The meaning of the degree was the foundation upon which the credits system was built; credits conveniently modularized content to make the degree more flexible. That is, the degree gave meaning to the credits, not vice versa. (Warren, 1974:118) Houle goes so far as to say the use of credits has even threatened to rob the degree of meaning. (1973:5) The use of credits is not yet universal; programs in some countries are still divided into years rather than credits.

Credits are not a good descriptor of degrees. Their assumptions are questionable as they are essentially a metric measurement of process. They imply almost nothing about what students learn, and do not differentiate between a three-year technical diploma and a three-year Bachelor program. Furthermore, credit systems do not suit all kinds of delivery systems nor all conceptions of degrees. Credits do not suit subjects defined as a small number of complex or culminating products (*e.g.*, thesis, portfolio, major practicum, reading program, comprehensive examinations, etc.)

Credit does not naturally suit assessment programs. Students' abilities are too open-ended to be expressed in exact class-time totals, except in the unlikely case that the evaluated skill exactly paralleled classwork. However, it is the most acceptable way to transfer credits

from an assessment program to an instructional course-work program. The underlying tension is between process and product; it is difficult to assign exact equivalence between product (what was examined) and the process (credit).

At worst, credits can be no more than an afterthought that either misrepresent programs or the way they are divided into units. This creates anomalies, such as doctoral theses worth only eight semester hours (*e.g.*, ABGTS, 1988:26). Some subjects have an artificial semester hour rating to fit in with other subjects in a credit-based school. Reading programs and small research projects often need no class time at all because students have individual interviews with the teacher; the product is most important. Time totals are irrelevant as long as the teacher is satisfied and the student's work is satisfactory.

This means that accreditors cannot justifiably oblige schools to use credit. The degree, not the credit unit, is the determining meaningful unit of currency; credits take their meaning from the meaning of the degree.

**The Place of Credit Systems**

Being autonomous, schools retain the right to decide what they will do about credit. They may opt not to use credits at all, or to define and structure their own credit systems. Admittedly, a uniform credit system makes inter-school credit transfer much easier, but schools which use semester hours need to retain the right to formulate their own internal systems and structures. The accreditor's role is to develop principles and standards acceptable throughout its constituency. For example, accreditors need to ensure that teachers in coursework instructional institutions have sufficient time with their students to supervise work adequately. They also need to ensure that the length of each class session and the time lapse between them is optimal for the kind of study done.

Although not integral to higher education, credit systems are nevertheless clearly still very useful for some kinds of delivery systems. They best suit coursework programs in instructional institutions, which is by far the most widespread conception of an institution of higher education. They allow administrators to divide a program into a manageable units that they can combine in different ways.

Credits suit any subject where objectives are very numerous but each is relatively small, and where general objectives are too vague to use as culminating products. PI is especially agreeable to credit because the details of the workload and the target population are defined very specifically. When using self-teaching materials, the proportion of class time is much lower but a higher proportion of the total time accountable.

Credit has several special uses in nontraditional education. It depends on the specification of a target group (the average passing student with ordinary entry prerequisites to do passing work when working to capacity). First, target populations need not always be defined in terms of supposedly equivalent campus groups. It is better to be independent of comparison with them, giving the freedom to include other kinds of demonstrably capable students. Second, schools using of some kinds of self-study materials can guarantee consistent and stable academic standards. Third, it can be advantageous that the definition of target groups excludes special students. Many potential students could be accepted only conditionally, or be second-chance students, or have non-standard entry prerequisites, or are upgrading from a less demanding lower qualification and by-pass normal entry. However, once the material has been found to suit the defined target population, the onus is upon special students to meet the standards. It is unjustifiable to let the program become less rigorous for special students. (*Cf.*

Mason, 1987:56f; Van Os *et al.*, 1987:249, 253) Not only that, after a school has ascertained the amount of time and assigned a credit rating, students can take extra time, which often happens anyway. They probably will if they have a light study load and study at home.

Despite the advantages of credit systems, then, accreditors should not require all schools to use them.

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