

Chapter XLV

Accreditation Experience of the Designated Subject Credential (DSC) Program at California State University, Long Beach

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ABSTRACT

To receive accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) is of utmost importance to every credential program in the State of California. Without it, programs are like drivers driving vehicles without a license. Naturally, those credential programs that do not receive accreditation are put on probation. Drawing from firsthand observation, reflection and introspection, the author of this paper shares with the reader successful accreditation experience with the Designated Subjects Credential (DSC) program at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) and reveals lessons associated with this accreditation experience.

INTRODUCTION

The Designated Subjects Credential (DSC) Program at California State University, Long Beach was initiated in 1976, the first non-University of California-based program approved

under the Ryan Act. There are two other comparable programs within the California State University system. The DSC has continuously operated as both career and technical education and adult education, and although this is an educational program, it is not housed in College of

Education. Instead, it is housed in the College of Health and Human Services and is considered part of an accreditation unit which comprises the College of Education and Affiliated Programs in the College of Health and Human Services (School Nursing, School Social Work, Designated Subjects, Adapted Physical Education, and Clinical Rehabilitative Services). During its 32 year existence, the DSC has evolved from one that was patched together from existing courses that totaled nearly 30 semester units of instruction, to one that was designed specifically to meet the program elements described in the Ryan Act and successive credential laws and regulations. The program boasts of its Level I and Level II courses that are designed according to credential regulations to prepare in-service teachers to teach career and technical and adult education courses in California.

The DSC is monitored by both regional and national accreditation. It must be pointed out that accreditation is a voluntary peer review process for assessing and enhancing academic and educational quality and it is required by Californian credential laws and regulations for authorization to offer credential programs. NCATE review process is voluntary; that is, institutions choose whether to be reviewed (Edelfelt & Reiman, 2003, p. 37). NCATE is the professional accrediting organization for schools, colleges, and departments of education in the United States. It is a coalition of more than thirty organizations representing teachers, teacher educators, policy makers, and the public (Fine, 2000, p. 55). NCATE accredits programs against standards it has developed (Edelfelt & Reiman, 2003, p. 37). According to Edelfelt and Reiman (2003), for accreditation by NCATE, an institution prepares a report that explains how its program conforms to NCATE's standards; then, a cross-section of educators from outside the state conduct a site visit to validate that the standards have been met (p. 37). Like all other credential programs in the nation, the DSC is

not immune from the so-called peer review process. Since its inception, the DSC has been evaluated every seven years by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. While traditional accreditation mechanisms are based on setting standards by consensus, the current approach focuses on student learning, valid assessment of student learning, and continuous program improvement, all based on evidence (Murray, 2000, p. 40). Obviously, without accreditation, no credential programs are authorized to offer either career/technical education teaching credentials or adult education teaching credentials in California. While NCATE is the premier national accreditation body for education professionals for preschool through high school education and it accredits initial (basic) and advanced credentials and masters programs, CCTC is the state licensing agency for educational professionals from preschool through high school and it accredits initial (basic) and advanced credentials programs.

Over the years, some credential programs in the United States have not received accreditation from either NCATE or their state licensing agencies. And their programs have been put on probation. Once they meet NCATE and their state's licensing standards, these programs can receive accreditation. However, this is not the case with the DSC at CSULB. For the past 32 years, the DSC has been reviewed and accredited four times in succession and the program has been deemed as an excellent model offering comprehensive preparation for candidates to teach a wide variety of career and technical and adult education programs in California. Not only do the NCATE and CCTC reviewers speak highly of the DSC at CSULB, some even go the extra mile by recruiting students for DSC at CSULB. When it comes to accreditation, many factors complicate how the process works for teacher education. The same is true with career and technical and adult education. Educators have cited pressure put

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