

A LIMITED CASE STUDY OF INITIAL  
ACCREDITATION PROCESSING IN  
POST-SECONDARY PROPRIETARY  
COLLEGES

by

Hyacinth Onungwa Anucha

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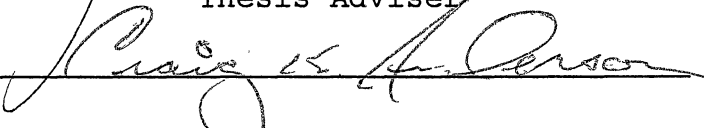
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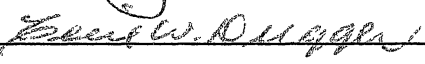


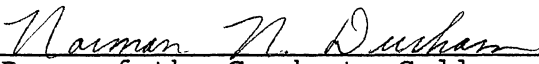
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Thesis Approved:

  
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Thesis Adviser

  
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Dean of the Graduate College

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Proprietary institutions of higher education are much like public institutions, in that their future and continuity is determined largely by the image of stability and program quality they project to the public. The administrators and board of trustees therefore must know what they need to do to maintain quality and institutional excellence. Underlying this obvious surge for prestige, however, proprietary institutions experience high turnover in terms of staff, students, and programs. Also, proprietary institutions are frequently sold, bought, opened, or merged for economic or non-educational reasons. Consequently, the students enrolled therein are insecure. They find upward mobility difficult either in jobs or transferring to another institution, college, or university. Moreover, the pressure from public institutions coupled with tax payment can lead a proprietary institution to offer weak programs. The proprietary institution needs money to operate. To protect the students' interest and achieve institutional quality and probity, proprietary institutions strive for accreditation.

Traditionally the academic community and the public have turned to the accrediting associations for quality assessment. Since its inception, nongovernmental accreditation has been voluntary and democratic in nature. The post secondary proprietary institutions operating in the years marked by the great social inventions and industrial developments were issuing bogus certificates. This spurred the need to define college and enforce pertinent standards. Thus accrediting agencies emerged to check these social problems, establish standards, reenforce and assure excellence and quality education. Institutions therefore seek accreditation.

Institutions within a state boundaries are usually monitored by the state. Regional or professional associations approve programs in proprietary institutions. Post-secondary accreditation is used by the federal government to determine eligibility for federal funding based on the information supplied by the independent accrediting agencies and the state. So, for proprietary institutions to obtain the needed money, they must be accredited by the regional accreditation association.

Faced with the urge to seek and hold accreditation, the proprietary institutions have to evaluate their programs. This is not an easy task and hardly undertaken voluntarily by an institution. Although important and decisive this issue of need has been overshadowed by a surging demand for

accreditation. The quality of the institutional programming and subsequent accreditation are the responsibilities of the administrators. However, there are persistent problems regarding lack of information about the accreditation process.

#### Statement of Problem

Administrators of some proprietary institutions in Oklahoma would like their institutions to be accredited. In addition to meeting agency's needs, they also have to meet their preparatory objectives. The problems with which this study was concerned was the lack of information about the accreditation process.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to document, through two case studies, the process by which post-secondary proprietary institutions in Oklahoma initiate and develop the evaluation process which leads to accreditation.

#### Objectives

To accomplish this purpose, this study included the following objectives:

1. To determine the process of initial accreditation of the proprietary institutions;

2. To ascertain accreditation requirements of the institutions;
3. Identify some selected basic accreditation problems the institutions encountered in the initial accreditation process;
4. Examine how the institutions responded to the needs of accreditation;
5. Determine primary evaluation procedures leading to accreditation of the institutions;
6. Develop documentation of the review process as a case study report.

#### Limitations

The scope of this study was initially limited to proprietary institutions in Oklahoma offering training programs leading to immediate employment. The study was further limited to these proprietary institutions that were undergoing the initial accreditation review process.

#### Definition of Terms

Accountability: the concept of truth in recording and acknowledgement of educational accomplishments stressing recognition of actual performance of learning outcomes on the part of students as well as teaching performance by teachers and administrative performance by principals, superintendents, etc.

Accreditation: a process of quality control and institutional program improvement to instate and invest an institution's learning/degree programs with integrity and validity for credibility to all of the institution's present and potential clientele as well as all of the academic and professional-technical communities.

Accreditation Status: the ultimate recognition and membership status granted by an accrediting association. For the National Association of Private, Nontraditional Schools and Colleges (NAPNSC), Accreditation Status is granted to institutions applying through the direct approach, or through the progress made during the pre-accreditation status of Recognized Candidate for Accreditation, when the institution has developed and implemented all of its degree programs in accordance with the eligibility criteria and standards of the Association as well as all elements and standards of the Action Plan as provided in the Handbook on Accreditation. Accreditation Status is granted when all elements and requirements of the Accreditation by Contract process have been completed, met and favorably evaluated.

Agency or Association: a corporation, association or other legal entity or units thereof which has the principal responsibility for carrying out the accrediting function.

Assessment: an appraisal of student learning outcomes to determine knowledge, skills and overall competency acquired within a program, course, or other learning mode.

Commission on Postsecondary Education: recommending body for the National Association of Private, Nontraditional Schools and Colleges; composed of individuals on the policy making boards of member institutions and individuals representing the public interest.

Comprehensive: covering all principal elements in a learning program.

Content: the subject matter that is the substance of an academic discipline such as mathematics, physics, biology, music, language, etc.

C.O.P.A.: Council on Postsecondary Accreditation; COPA was formed in 1975 from the merger of the private accrediting bodies of the National Commission on Accrediting (NCA) and the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education (FRACHE) into one coordination organization founded to foster and recognize probity and consistency of voluntary accreditation procedures in nongovernmental agencies.

Cost-Effectiveness: tangible benefits for monies spent involving budget planning and evaluation of results (in this case, pertaining to educational dollars spent).

Criterion (criteria): a carefully specified set of general conditions intended for use as arbiter(s) in qualitative measurement and judgment. Criteria may have both quantitative and qualitative based standards incorporated within them.

Eligibility Criteria: those conditions specifying qualities regarded as fundamental and essential for the viable operation of a legitimate, educational institution and required of an applying institution seeking either of the preliminary affiliations (correspondent status or recognized candidate for accreditation) or accreditation status.

Evaluation: an appraisal of policies and processes conducted by either subjective or objective methods.

Evaluation (Visiting) Team: a group of specifically assigned academic examiners qualified in the academic fields of expertise required to evaluate the quality of learning programs, the adequacy of institutional procedures and delivery systems, and the effectiveness of modes of assessment of learning outcomes of a given institution engaged in the accreditation process.

Formative Evaluation: evaluation used to improve an on-going process or project by providing feedback to the administrators in charge.

Program: a systematic, usually sequential, grouping of courses forming a considerable part or all of the requirements for a degree or credential.

Process: deliberately designed means of generating learning outcomes.

Proprietary Institution: Befitting institutions owned by a private individual or corporation under a trademark or patent offering career training leading to immediate employment.

Self-Study: an introspective, published analysis identifying all of the components, strengths, and weaknesses of the overall educational programs and processes within a particular institution.

Summative Evaluation: evaluation of a complete product.

Standard: a specific, required minimum condition which may be quantitatively or qualitatively based.

Traditional: those educational systems requiring in-class instruction as measured by accumulated units of academic credit with the primary emphasis upon institutional inputs and processes and a lesser concern with systematic determination of learning outcomes.

Validation: determination and establishment of the existence and effectiveness of given qualities of an institution or learning program, i.e., a reconciliation of actual value of a quality with its purported or alleged



value as reported in an institution's self-study, which is a responsibility of the evaluating team.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The literature reviewed relative to this study consists of eight main parts: (a) Definition, and Reasons for Accreditation Development, (b) Recent History and Current Status, (c) Accrediting Agencies, (d) Types of Accreditation, (e) Problems of Accreditation, (f) Evaluation, (g) Results of Similar Studies, and (h) Summary.

#### Definition of Accreditation and Reasons for Development

Over the years along with changes in social purposes accreditation has been defined differently (Harclerod, 1980). In the 1880s when the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools was formed, the leaders felt that a better understanding and relationship between the secondary school personnel and college leaders in New England could be achieved if they could meet and discuss the problems and confusions regarding admission practices (Harclerod, 1980). So, for this purpose, the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools was

established in 1885 (Fuess, 1960). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1895 intended to:

1. Organize southern schools and colleges for cooperation and mutual assistance.
2. Elevate the standard of scholarship and to effect uniformity of entrance requirements.
3. Develop preparatory schools and cut off this work from the colleges (Association of Colleges and Schools of the Southern States, 1926, p. 7).

An organization that adopted a constitution and by-laws was effected on this basis.

The problems of definition were not new to Donald C. Agnew. He stated that the Southern Association sought to effect order from the educational anarchy throughout the south by specifically defining the differences between preparatory schools and colleges. The Association greatly pushed to establish requirements for secondary school graduation and establishment of admission and graduation criteria for colleges and universities (Agnew, 1970). The establishment of criteria for admissions, graduation and institution's needs and consequently recognizing the institutions that have in fact met them led to early definitions of accreditation.

In their study, Zook and Haggerty (1936, p. 18) use the term "accrediment" and defined it as:

... The recognition accorded to an education institution in the United States by means of inclusion in a list of institutions issued by some agency or organization which sets up standard or requirements that must be complied with in order to secure approval.

Later definitions, however, emphasized process as opposed to recognition. Selden (1960) in his definition moves away from listing and recognition to process:

... Basically, accrediting is the process whereby an organization or agency recognizes a college or university or a program of study as having met certain pre-determined qualifications or standards (p. 5).

The need for suitable definition led Young (1980), the first president of the Council on Post Secondary Accreditation (COPA) , to define Voluntary Accreditation in terms of a concept, a process, and a status. Accreditation in his three-part definition is:

... a concept ... unique to the United States by which institutions of post-secondary education or professional associations from voluntary, non-governmental organizations to encourage and assist institutions in the evaluation and improvement of their educational quality and to publicly acknowledge those institutions or merits within institutions that meet or exceed commonly agreed to minimum expectations of educational quality.

... a process by which an institution of post-secondary education formally evaluates its activities, in whole or in part, and seeks an independent judgment that it substantially achieves its own objectives and is generally equal in quality to comparable institutions or specialized units. Essential elements of the process are: (1) a clear statement of educational objectives, (2) a direct self-study focused on those objectives, (3) an on-site evaluation by a selected group of peers, and (4) a decision by an independent commission that the institution or specialized units is worthy of accreditation.

... a status of affiliation given an institution or specialized unit within an institution which has gone through the accrediting process and has been judged to meet or exceed general expectations of educational quality (pp. 1,5).

Definitely, this precise definition represents the educator's long-held view of what accreditation is (Harclerod, 1980). Though accreditation has been defined differently to suit establishments' purposes, the later definitions assume systematic process as essential in defining accreditation. Institutions that have not been accredited surge for accreditation for obvious reasons.

The literature reviewed relative to reasons for accreditation suggests that quality is essential in any institution. Selden (1960) observes that the panorama of collegiate education at the turn of the past century presented a scene of active confusion. Students were enrolled in an increasing number from secondary schools by institutions being founded at a rapid rate without commonly accepted academic standards or admission requirements. Questions were raised about courses and degree standards, calling for more precision in defining a college. Before then, bogus degrees and certificates were rampant. In the medical profession, conditions were obviously bad and required change. Selden (1960) notes that by 1847 when the American Medical Association was established, the Doctor of Medicine degree was being awarded for less than six months of study plus some apprenticeship. Also, standards and

admission requirements were practically nonexistent. It was dangerous. Up to 1880, only eleven states had enacted licensing for doctors, quoted Orlans (1975). The antiquated proprietary medical schools were far from set of standard rules. Hofstadler (1963) acknowledges that the old proprietary medical schools were essentially profit-making institutions without laboratories and hospital connections, in which teaching was done by lecture and a rare dissection.

To meet the aspirations of educators and the profession to protect and aggrandize the standing of proprietary medical schools, institutions and professions, accreditation was deemed necessary.

Moreover, many institutions need federal funding to upgrade their programming. In any case, to be eligible for federal money, an institution must be accredited. Trivatt (1976) reports that an institution or school must be accredited and meet the minimum statutory requirements to become eligible to participate in federal aid to education programs regulated by the United States Office of Education.

Proprietary institutions are direct beneficiaries of expanding federal assistance. Ostensibly, proprietary institutions were not seeking equality with traditional colleges but are interested in attaining eligibility for federal funding. Young (1983) points out that the primary importance of accreditation to proprietary schools was not acceptance as institutions of higher learning in

coordination of their activities with traditional colleges, but rather the attainment of eligibility for federal funds. Without accreditation, proprietary institutions remain low in the educational totem pole. Among other concerns for accreditation of proprietary institutions was contracting of public vocational programs. Orlans, et al. (1975) believe that in a broad educational, economic and political sense, proprietary institutions compete for students, status, money and governmental dispensation with all public and nonprofit institutions. Proprietary institutions are in more direct competition with public vocational schools and junior colleges. Nonetheless, proprietary schools have to pay taxes to subsidize their opposition. Consequently, many proprietary institutions have disappeared, and those that outlive financial hardship offer students what they cannot get free from public and traditional institutions.

The need to protect institutions and consumer's interests is a compelling reason for proprietary schools to get accreditation. Sensitivity to public need also emerged as a theme in the role of accreditation in consumer protection. Warner and Anderson (1982) discuss the importance of accrediting agencies in serving the education consumer and ways in which an agency can improve this service. They acquiesce that accreditation was enhancing and protecting basic education quality, without which most of the other consumer interest on higher education would be

unquestionably meaningless. In addition, they indicate that consumer (student) protection indeed rated ahead of all official purposes set forth in the handbook of accreditation at that time. In proprietary institutions, staff, student and program turnover can result from changes in ownership and management. Orlans (1975) also voices this concern as most schools assign large sums of money to advertising and recruiting with the ever-present danger of misrepresentation or of relaxed standards of probity, in order to maintain tuition volume. So, meaningful standards must be enforced through accreditation in proprietary institutions. There is no doubt that accreditation is to maintain quality instruction.

One of the basic claims made for accreditation is that it is a powerful force for the strengthening of educational quality. Petersen (1979) expresses this in the Accrediting Standards and Guidelines. She reports that the commissions are in virtually complete agreement when they view accreditation primarily as a means for promoting excellence in higher education generally, and for encouraging self-improvement in individual institutions through the development of guidelines and criteria for assessing educational effectiveness. Davis (1974) agrees with this. In his manuscript, he states that excellence and institutional improvement, quality and assuring the educational community, general public and other agencies or



organizations of continuous achievement of appropriate educational objectives thus established are the purposes of accreditation.

#### Recent History and Current Status

The formative base of accreditation could be traced to the era from 1787 to 1914. The New York Regents was legally established in 1787 to annually visit and review the work of every college in the state and report to the legislature. Harclerod (1980) annotates that Iowa in 1846, Utah in 1896, Washington in 1909, Virginia in 1912, and Maryland in 1914 were other states that adopted legislation similar to that of the New York Board of Regents.

In the second half of the Eighteenth Century, many counterfeit medical degrees were in existence. Harclerod (1980) records that the American Medical Association became the first voluntary programmatic association to be formed in 1847. With the proliferation of traditional and nontraditional schools, proprietary institutions and colleges as the social inventions of the industrial era, there was confusion in higher education. The great expansion led to the development of new academic disciplines and there was no distinction among institutions (Harclerod, 1980). The tumult led to the formation of regional associations. Petersen (1979) observes that it began as a reform movement in the early decades of the century when the

need for some type of quality control in secondary and higher education was becoming increasingly evident. There was a dire need to define College. Zook and Haggerty (1936) narrate that the simple need to define College had powerful consequences involving the Office of Education as elucidated by the early digressions. The Office of Education known at that time as the U.S. Bureau of Education was mainly a statistical agency. In order to carry out its functions, of summarizing the educational activities of the nation, it was needful for the Bureau to ascertain the number of colleges, the number of teachers and students as well. This task was difficult without first an answer to the question, what is a college? There was no commonly accepted standards for admission to a college or for completing a degree. To alleviate this problem, Petersen (1979) points out that several educational associations whose primary purposes were to discuss problems of common interest, to elevate academic standards, to monitor college admissions and to strengthen articulation between secondary and higher education emerged. In the long period from 1787 to 1914, educators formed four regional associations--New England, Middle States, Southern, and North Central. Each of the associations established worked hard to enforce academic standards. However, it was not until 1912 that the North Central Association established the first set of 12 criteria for accreditation, and 1913 when they published the first list of accredited

institutions (Harclerod, 1980). Also, defining a college posed a problem of exigent importance to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Zook and Haggerty (1936) enumerate qualities of a ranked college as seen and used by the foundation (which albeit espoused the definition of the New York Regents) to disburse the pension for college faculty:

An institution to be ranked as college must have at least six professors giving their entire time to college and university work, a course of four full years in liberal arts and sciences, and should require for admission not less than the usual four years of academic or high school preparation, or its equivalent, in addition to the preacademic or grammar school studies.

A tax-supported institution must be in receipt of an annual income of not less than \$100,000.

An institution not support by taxation ... must have a productive endowment of not less than \$200,000 over the above any indebtedness of the institution...(p. 24).

Selden (1971) declares that in the Council on Medical Education published a classification of medical schools in 1905 and started inspection of schools in 1906, prepared a second list in 1907 that categorized 160 schools as approved, probation, or unapproved.

There is neither Federal Ministry of Education nor a centralized authority exercising single national control over educational institutions. Heusser (1982) relates that various degrees of control over education is assumed by the states, allowing post-secondary educational institutions to operate with considerable independence and autonomy. He

states that federal participation in accrediting activity was traced to its involvement in the establishment of regulations for college preparation and examination in veterinary medicine by the Department of Agriculture and the Civil Service Commission. This federal influence continued from 1897 until 1957 when the American Veterinary Medicine Association founded in 1932 assumed accrediting function. In their fact sheet, NAS-NAPNSC (1982) mention that the Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1952 led to the formation of the Federal Bureau in the U.S. Office of Education known as the Accreditation and Institutional Eligibility Staff in 1968 which later in 1980 became the Eligibility and Agency Evaluation Staff.

Between 1948 and 1975, however, Harclerod (1980) identified major changes in accreditation.

The Association of American Universities in 1948 stopped its listing of institutions, which for 40 years had been the most prominent form of accreditation, listing of educational quality of institutions. Other associations sprang up. The National Commission on Accrediting and the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commission of Higher Education tried to work together on common goal, standards, and procedures, and finally merged in 1975.

The federal role also increased due to massive enrollment in colleges and universities and consequent federal funding and student assistance. In an attempt to

stem proliferation and to stop federal encroachment on voluntary association, the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation developed extensive research programs and publication in accreditation. COPA has continued to do so since 1975. Accrediting has since then extended its purposes to protection of education consumers rights, and realization of social equity goals. Harcleroad (1980) visualizes that the future seems clear that the police power of government cannot be turned to voluntary associations: "The states actually have the police powers in the field of education." So, the dual effort of states and voluntary membership associations appears very possible. Present practices in effect in Oklahoma and Maryland may well be indicative of future directions.

#### Accrediting Agencies

Nongovernmental accreditation reflects the American way of solving new problems. The complexity of the problems created by the appearance of apprenticeship, training, proprietary institutions, colleges and universities as the inventions of the industrial era led to the formation of accrediting agencies. When the higher education status was in confusion and questionable, regional and professional agencies grew to arrest the inauspicious situation to define college, protect educational consumers, and institutions as well. Petersen (1979, pp. 1-2) indicates that these

associations rejected the European system of governmental control and external examination and sought a system "compatible with the political and traditional heritage of this country." So, "a system of voluntary, nongovernmental, self regulatory evaluation and accreditation" was developed to monitor quality in higher education.

Authorities differ slightly on exact dates of the establishment of regional associations, however, four of the six associations were organized within a ten-year period (Petersen, 1979). The New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools was the first to be formed in 1885, followed by the Association of the Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Middle States and Maryland in 1887. Wiley and Zald (1968) agree that the North Central Association was founded in 1894 while the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools was begun in 1895. After many years, the Northwest Association was formed in 1917 and the Western Association was the last to be established in 1924. The formation of these agencies had positive impact on the educational community to make efforts toward college accrediting. As Grinnell (1936) describes:

At the opening of the fourth half of the decade of the North Central Association's existence the anxious attention of the Association and, to a significant extent, of the leaders of higher education all over the country, was turned on its experiment in college inspection and accrediting. No one expected precipitated action. The decision to accredit had waited on several years of deliberation, and several more years had gone into making all needful preliminary

investigations and preparations. But in 1910 it seemed that the last of the preparatory moves had been made. A committee to inaugurate the work was appointed, equipped with standards for judging the liberal arts colleges both in the universities and separately (p. 488).

Troutt (1979, pp. 199-210) identifies five common criteria that were claimed by the accrediting agencies to have some relationship with quality assurance. These are: "institutional purposes and objectives," "educational programs," "financial resources," "faculty," and the "library center." However, no well-established results from research studies has made significant claim that any of these characteristics represent a measure of institutional quality.

The United States without federal ministry of education maintains educational standards through the accrediting agencies. As Thrash (1976) states:

Although the United States has no federal ministry of education, it relies to a great extent on the voluntary accrediting agencies to develop and maintain educational standards in institutions. These agencies, in order to deal with accreditation and eligibility matters, must be recognized by the Office of Education through its Accreditation and Institutional Eligibility Staff (AIES) established in 1968 ( pp. 1-2).

The agencies nevertheless do not function unchecked. Heusser (1982) indicates that the Eligibility and Agency Evaluation Staff is responsible for determining whether those accrediting agencies which submit petitions are reliable authorities to monitor and promote quality of education offered. Finkih (1973) identifies and explains

the functions performed by accreditation. There exists nine functions that are listed by the U.S. Office of Education and performed by voluntary accreditation:

1. Certifying that an institution has met established standards.
2. Assisting prospective students in identifying acceptable institutions.
3. Assisting institutions in determining the acceptability of transfer credits.
4. Helping to identify institutions and programs for the investment of public and private funds.
5. Protecting an institution against harmful internal and external pressures.
6. Creating goals for self-improvement of weaker programs and stimulating a general raising of standards among educational institutions.
7. Involving the faculty and staff comprehensively in institutional evaluation and planning.
8. Establishing criteria for professional certificates, licenses and for upgrading courses offering such preparation.
9. Providing one basis for determining eligibility for federal assistance (pp. 339-342).

The accrediting agencies work to insure fulfillment of the Office of Education's stipulated purposes. And to be relied on by the Office of Education they are obliged to assure the institutions and general public of quality standards. In the 1930s, however, the North Central Association adopted a new principle of accreditation, less objective in nature and based on judging an institution in



terms of its purposes and its total pattern as an institution.

The specialized agencies accrediting proprietary institutions is very common once the institution began making an impact as an agency in fields other than trades. Administrators as well as students are mutually interested in the status aspect of professional accreditation. Messersmith and Medsker (1969) in their research acknowledge that many nonbaccalaureate degree programs were specifically accredited by professional associations in business, engineering, nursing, dentistry, and medicine. The agencies work together with the National Commission on Accrediting.

In all accrediting Orlans (1975) says that the specialized interests of accreditors, the broader interests of the public, and the technical and political problems of defining and enforcing meaningful standards are the three factors constantly discernible. In any case, Scott (1983, p. 32) realizes that "the accrediting bodies have advertised their equivalent of the good housekeeping seal of approval so widely that most institutions must seek the status even if they are uncertain of its value."

These agencies have made enormous contributions toward the accrediting movement and to higher education. These were summarized as follows by Friley (1950):

The regional associations of the nation did a pioneering job of tremendous significance; they are still the backbone of the accrediting movement. ... Their activities have clearly set

the pattern for an acceptable institution of higher education in America, and have unquestionably helped the American people generally to understand and appreciate the essentials of good college or university (p. 539).

### Types of Accreditation

Basically, there are two types of educational accreditation, identified as specialized or programmatic and institutional or general accreditation.

Specialized accreditation usually applies to the evaluation of programs, departments or schools which in all intent and purpose are parts of a total collegiate or other post-secondary institution. The accredited unit can be a college, school within a university or a curriculum within a single discipline. Specialized accrediting agencies evaluate programs in institutions that have already been accredited by an accrediting commission. Also, some of the specialized accrediting agencies accredit institutions that offer professional programs, vocational, post-secondary or specialized independent institutions.

So a specialized or programmatic accrediting agency can function in the capacity of an institutional accrediting agency.

On the other hand, institutional accreditation applies to an institution as a whole, implying that every unit is contributing to the achievement of an institution's stipulated objectives, though not necessarily all on the

same level of quality. However, specialized or programmatic accreditation and institutional or general accreditation all function to insure a basic level of quality in proprietary institutions.

### Problems of Accreditation

Many educators agree that accreditation has come a long way with many problems. It has established itself in the society from controversy to constructive criticism. In the annual report of the executive directors of National Commission on Accreditation, Dickey (March 1966) expresses that the most basic question posed for accreditation is that of how to encourage flexibility, experimentation, and innovation in the operation of those junior and community college programs and at the same time maintain quality and reasonable degree of uniformity. Further, he notes that there will probably not be a perfect balance. Delays in formulating and adopting revised policies will result in more chaotic situations in the future.

In the past two centuries, accreditation procedure has evolved many terms and varied voluntary or state associations. Harclerod (1980) agrees:

A recurring problem in the field of accreditation is the use of widely varied terms by associations or agencies as they (1) evaluate educational institutions or programs according to a set of predetermined standards or qualifications, and (2) admit them to membership or place them on a public list of approved institutions. The New York Regents have used the

term "register" for almost 200 years. The American Medical Association and the American Bar Association for decades use the term "approve." The Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education currently use the term "accredit." The federal government since 1952 has "listed" institutions that are "eligible" for federal funding programs. And most programmatic or institutional associations use the term "accredit" for those institutions that are admitted and retained in full membership (p. 2).

However, educators and other governmental officials generally prefer to use the term accredit. Continuing problems in accreditation are observed by Selden (1960), which seem the most important at that time:

1. What accreditation criteria can be developed that places less emphasis on minimum standards and more on continued institutional reevaluation, experimentation, and improvement?
2. How can accreditation be made more stimulating for institutions of quality?
3. How can the inevitable increases in the accreditation of graduate schools be designed without impairing independent research and individual scholarship?
4. How can the need for quality assurance in specialized institutions and professional programs be met without increasing the number of professional accrediting bodies?
5. How can accreditation be simplified without limiting its effectiveness?
6. How can accreditation adequately satisfy the needs of various groups and the public for more information about the degree of quality of individual institutions?
7. How can government's growing interest in post-secondary education be met without increasing its involvement in accreditation?

Between now and then, however, assured progress has been made. Yet, other problems are evolving. Most plaguing of all is lack of information about the accrediting. Huffman (1982) recognizes that most of the administrators of institutions have little information about the accrediting process. Also, Warner and Anderson (1982, p. 32) observe a potential change towards accreditation: "Clearly, the direction of change should be to provide more accreditation information to the public, not less." Anstein (1979) also notes that a massive problem in accreditation is inadequate knowledge of institutional and program evaluation. In addition, he expresses concern about evaluation reports which are not made available to the public.

Moreover, Mathews (1975) cites that "there is a widespread distrust and indignation over the accrediting process," and that this is prevalent in the NCA region. He adds that if something is not done soon to alter and reform the accrediting process, "the legal adversary relationships created by faculty organizations will soon trench upon other regional accrediting agencies." His concern about the accrediting team members are as follows:

Team members who have not been either presidents or trustees tend to force their own philosophies of governance and administration on the local president and board of trustees. Failure of an institution to submit to this, results in its not receiving "accreditation" or in being put on "probation." In effect, we see the accrediting agency substituting its philosophies for those of the trustees and president. ... Fiscal neophytes make up too many examining teams

and force their management philosophies on institutions. (p. 29).

Also, Anstein (1979) agrees that divergent between self imposed goals and public needs is a central weakness of the present eligibility system. Conversely, there seems to be existing tensions between the regulators and the regulated. Too often, O'Neil and Heaney (1982, p. 57) remark that "accreditation is something that happens to them, rather than something that they make work for them." Institutions tend to be reactive instead of active to accreditation. Millard (1983) believes that the institutional officials feel intimidated by accrediting agencies, both regional and specialized.

Notwithstanding, accreditation is an expensive venture. In his study, Stoodley (1982) observes that there is a dire need, as shown by institution administration and faculties to reduce the cost of the self study without threatening the purpose and validity of the evaluation process in accreditation. Many educators have recorded that accreditation reduces different institutions with different backgrounds to a common denominator. In his view, Larson (1974) outlines four selected basic problems of accreditation:

1. The problem of allowing for institutional differences in a common accreditation evaluation;
2. The problem of basing accreditation decision on real college substance rather than in elements of form;

3. The problem of determining the actual qualifications of the graduate; and
4. The problem of determining the focus or function of accreditation (p. 2).

~~From literature reviewed, the accrediting procedures are both costly in time and money and institutions feel victimized.~~ The evaluating teams most often are captured by special interests notably the specialized accrediting groups. Team members often mistake form for substance and evaluate the institutions with standards in their own home schools. Anstein (1979) relates the problem, it is not only our difficulty but also the ~~political difficulty of maintaining standards for which there is justification.~~

### Evaluation

The institution seeking accreditation takes the initiative in accreditation. O'Neil and Heaney (1982) indicate that the accreditation system is designed to strengthen institutions and their programs. They add that institutions are condemned to a reactive posture if their administrators are ignorant of the history, purposes, scope and pattern of accreditation. In any given institution, there is a need to know what accrediting bodies it interacts with and what benefits are expected by the institution from these relationships. Also, Young (1983) attests that knowing the scope, dimensions and flexibility of an accrediting body can only help an institution effectively

tailor and plan accreditation review to complement its own needs.

The evaluation leading to accreditation was reviewed in two parts: Program evaluation and institution evaluation.

#### Program Evaluation

One aspect of "accountability" is to demonstrate that an activity or program is fulfilling its stated purposes. One result of the decreasing income is to examine more closely the activities and programs of an organization to see if they are sufficiently performed, effective and needed. Thus, the increased demand for accountability and the pressures of limited resources have greatly increased the need for program evaluation (Fife, 1980, p. ii).

Heusser (1982) recognizes that evaluation is the key to accreditation, since it facilitates a continuance of a dynamic and flexible educational experience. Notwithstanding, Huffman (1982) agrees that most administrators have little information about the process.

Many researchers have tried to answer the obvious question--Why evaluate? In his book, Wentling (1975) reasons that we evaluate to offer the highest quality programs possible given the resources available by making sound decisions regarding available alternatives, through appropriate kinds of rational information in addition to intuition, personal experience, and informed judgment opinion. He also identifies four forms of evaluation as planning, programming, implementing and recycling. These were corrolaries of Stufflebeam's evaluation model



comprising of context, input, process, and product. In his report, Fisher (1977) relates that through assessment of strength and weaknesses we indicate needed area of professional and personal development. Further, internal communication would improve team work and management, and the institution's worth would be assured the general audience. Nordval (1979) in his research report recognizes three reasons for evaluation:

1. Pressure and demands from external and internal sources;
2. Improvement of performance of individual administrators;
3. Improvement of performance of the institution.

Though researchers may differ on the evaluation reason, Heaney (1982) confirms that "institutions need to know what they must do to maintain the quality of their institution and assure the public of this quality (p. 57)."

Feasley (1980) demonstrates that initial evaluations were begun to determine the need for proposed programs and have spread to encompass most existing programs on a screening schedule. To facilitate a quality program, he adds that "basic elements, benefits and deficits of principal budgetary approach are examined simultaneously (p. 2)."

Gardner (1977) identifies and discusses a need for greater understanding of alternative evaluation approaches

available in higher education. In his frameworks of evaluation, they follow as:

1. Evaluation as measurement.
2. Evaluation as professional judgment.
3. Evaluation as the assessment of congruence between performance and objectives.
4. Decision-oriented evaluation.
5. Goal-free/responsive evaluation (p. 573).

He advises that the methodology most appropriate to a situation should be applied during evaluation. Brinkerhoff (1983) delineates standards for evaluating educational programs and organized them into four domains. These address: "utility (evaluation should be useful and practical)," "feasibility (evaluations should be realistic and prudent)," "propriety (evaluations should be conducted legally and ethically)," and "accuracy (evaluations should be technically adequate)" (p. 210).

Evaluation questions are phrased in such simple language to greatly facilitate understanding, ascertain three basic program evaluation questions:

1. Did the program achieve what was expected?
2. Was the program carried out as planned?
3. Was it the "right" program?

This conforms with the summative evaluation. In the formative evaluation Wentling (1975) asks in a logical order:

1. Where are you and what are your needs? (context)
2. How will you get there? (input)
3. How are you doing on getting there? (process)
4. Have you made it? (product)

Brickell (1976) ascribes the differences among research, evaluation and policy formulation to the temporal sphere within which each occurs:

A research question asks about durable relationship among variables over the passage of time and over shifting circumstances. It yields generalization, possibly explanations, hopefully predictions. An evaluation question asks about what may be temporary relationship among variables at a particular point in time, in a particular circumstance. It yields conclusions about the effects of past events and past attempts to intervene in these events. A policy question asks about the wisest alternative for future actions and about how to create the future deliberately. It yields advice on how to act to achieve some desired effects (p. 8).

Past interpositions and ramifications of future decisions must be taken into account during evaluation of programs, he adds.

Comprehensive program evaluation has been sought for in evaluating federally sponsored programs. Rentz and Rentz (1978) report that as a result of criticisms launched at it, the Vocational Education Amendment of 1976 calls for the development of a comprehensive system of evaluation and accountability. The amendments make provisions for:

1. Preparation of annual state program plans and accountability reports.
2. Federal and state annual program evaluation.

3. Development of Vocational Education Data and Occupational Information Systems.
4. Independent annual evaluations by the National and State Advisory Councils on Vocational Education (p. 70).

In reviewing this amendment Rentz and Rentz (1978) are quick to point out that if evaluation is to be applied for "systematic and comprehensive program planning," "policy setting," and "review," the evaluation "activities must be responsive to the varying information needs of decision makers at all levels within the vocational education system (p. 71)." Additionally, Wasdyke (1977) notes that the implementation of a comprehensive evaluation system for vocational education programs will meet numerous obstacles.

Obviously there is a large middle ground for the use and results of program evaluation. Its success depends on how well the process is thought out, how accurate the data is gathered, and how honestly it is analyzed. ... There first must be some basic understanding concerning what is meant by evaluation and knowledge concerning the various evaluation procedures and techniques that are available (Fife, 1980, p. ii).

If the bottom line of program evaluation remains the improvement of human services (Attkisson and Browkowski, 1978), achieving this aim depends on the use of evaluation information by decision makers.

#### Institutional Evaluation

Institutions applying for accreditation are required to certify that it has met established procedures. Heusser (1982) lists many eligibility criteria with initial minimum

standards which institutions must meet. These are partitioned and involve "evaluation of government authority," "governing board," "chief administrative officer," "educational programs," etc. Further, the "institution should exemplify alternative nontraditional, innovative education at the post-secondary level (Heusser, 1982, p. 21).

Many models have been developed for evaluation of institutions. Earlier approaches to evaluation focused mainly on results or outcomes. In recent years, some interesting attempts have been made extending the scope of evaluation variables in different evaluation models. Stufflebeam's (1971) Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) Model suggests that evaluation focus on four aspects of an evaluation thing: (1) its goals; (2) its design; (3) its process of implementation; and (4) its outcomes. According to this model, adequate evaluation of an institution would be an assessment of (a) the merit of its goals, (b) the quality of its plans, (c) the extent to which those plans are being carried out, and (d) the worth of its outcomes.

A theoretical approach perceiving evaluation as an activity intended to determine whether goals have been achieved (Tyler, 1950) recommends the following evaluation process:

1. Stating goals in behavioral terms;

2. Developing measurement instruments;
3. Collecting data;
4. Interpreting findings;
5. Making recommendations.

Stufflebeam, et al. (1971), also provide another approach, perceiving evaluation as providing information for decision making. This process includes:

1. Identification of information needs of decision makers;
2. Collection of relevant information;
3. Providing evaluation information to decision makers.

In the institutional evaluation, an evaluation intended to build staff awareness, commitment and knowledge might apply this cycle:

1. Identifying problem area;
2. Define staff expectations and value positions;
3. Collect performance information;
4. Providing discrepancy reports to staff and helping

to resolve conflicts.

According to Brinkerhoff (1983, p. xviii), "all evaluations should consider interactions between the evaluator and the evaluated at the outset of the evaluation to communicate its findings to the audiences." Kennedy (1978) recommends that the planning process used for developing an evaluation plan can clarify the questions to be asked, suggest the appropriate methodologies to use, and

increase the value and use of the evaluation findings. Orlans, et al. (1975) observe that actions of individual institutions are crucial and is anything but self-evident that state decisions as opposed to local decisions are made with a higher order of rationality and a clear adherence to the public interest. Wentling (1975) concludes that the information gained from these types of evaluations could be scrutinized closely to identify strengths and weaknesses, the reasons for ineffectiveness of the program in terms of product evaluation. Love (1983) identifies elements of internal evaluation as including among others are: the organizational context and development, integrating program evaluation and management, conducted for improving the quality of higher education.

Petersen (1979) also emphasizes the institution's mission and objectives, organization, administration, governance, instructional staff--with qualification, number, conditions of service together with student, evaluated, must meet requirements to reflect educational permissiveness with the confines of responsible judgment. Moreover, students and student services, admissions, library, facilities and equipment, clinical and laboratory facilities, and most of all financial resources are evaluated in institutional evaluation to assure institutional probity (Petersen, 1979).

According to Wentling (1975) valid and reliable evaluation data correctly analyzed should reveal one or a combination of these:

1. A situation in which change or changes previously planned for have occurred.

2. The situation being studied has not had changes occur, and does not need any changes.

3. The situation needs change, for the benefit of people.

He recognizes that the basis for change should change be indicated is the most important reason for collecting information.

#### Results of Similar Studies

The literature reviewed relative to the problem of lack of information about the initial accreditation process suggest that information is very important in the accrediting process and should be initially accorded great concern. Heusser (1982, p. 1) cautions that "misconceptions and abundant misinformation about accreditation can be very confusing and frustrating to say the least." Feasley (1980, p. 43) recommends that "evaluations should be guided in the preparation of useful report focusing on determining who the decision makers will be, what information they will need, and when they will need that information." Communication is extremely important right from the internal evaluation



process. Poulton (1978) reinforces this claim. He believes that "internal communication to program staff members that conveys fairness, candor and flexibility boosts the use of evaluations" (p. 12). Brinkerhoff (1983) remarks that the task of selecting the appropriate information sources and methods is initially governed by practical concern. Also, Anstein (1979) identifies one of the biggest problems pertaining evaluation as inadequate knowledge of institutional and program evaluation. "This is inherent in all forms of screening..." He believes that the problem is compounded by the emphasis on pluralism on the variety of American educational institutions which makes it very difficult "to reduce uncommon colleges to a common denominator." Warner and Anderson (1982) have made it explicitly clear that information should be made available to those who need it. They state:

Clearly, the direction of change should be to provide more accreditation information to the public, not less. In the Western region, the Western Accreditation Region emphasizes on improvement of self-study, development of new standards, development of a complaint policy, and improved communication. ... These communications have provided institutions and the public with a clearer understanding of accreditation and the steps taken to protect and serve the education consumer (p. 32).

Misinformation and lack of information could be expensive.

Stoodley (1982) studies the development and evaluation of a single self-study method for use in two-year post-secondary institutional and multiprogram accreditation. In

this three-phase study he recognizes that there is a dire need to reduce the cost of the self study by institution administrators, without threatening the purpose and validity of the evaluation process, as along with institutional accreditation.

#### Summary

The status of being accredited is good, for determining and maintaining educational quality and excellence both in traditional and non-traditional postsecondary institutions. The accreditation process provides a vehicle for systematic self assessment and institutional planning. The relationship between regional accrediting agencies and the institution is of prime importance. The agency sees itself as providing valuable services to the institution, while the institution tends to be reactive to these services.

Voluntary accreditation, however, is not really voluntary with the proprietary institutions when, all and all, viewed from the highly competitive environment of postsecondary education of the 1980s. The proprietary institutions have to compete for students, social support and eligibility for federal funding. On this condition accreditation is no longer voluntary. However, practitioners visualize a situation in which each technical program would be coerced to undergo accreditation both for purposes of funding and for placement of graduates. In any

case, most administrators feel that they could be swallowed up in the mechanics of massive accrediting procedures.

Studies indicate that lack of information about accreditation and the accrediting process is a serious problem. Information should be given an initial concern since it is the basis to effect the desired change.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to document through two case studies the process by which post-secondary proprietary institutions in Oklahoma initiate and develop the evaluation process which leads to accreditation.

#### Selection of Institutions

This study was limited to two post-secondary proprietary institutions in Oklahoma offering career training leading to immediate employment. The two institutions both offer associate degrees and both are located at Tulsa, Oklahoma. To be included in the study, the institution had to be undergoing initial accreditation review. This limit was placed on the study by the researcher and his academic committee because it was believed that the personnel associated with institutions that were in the process of initial accreditation review would be more realistic in providing accurate information about an evaluation process leading to accreditation; identifying specific problems or difficulties in the

process; and recommending processes for other institutions that would be in a similar situation. The institutions were specifically selected because they fit the definition of proprietary institutions as defined in this study (See p. 8), and because they are both perceived to be institutions in which the leadership is committed to providing high quality programs and to achieving regional accreditation recognition of that quality.

#### Data Collection

The data for this study was collected through (1) interview, (2) primary sources, and (3) secondary sources. Primary sources constitute first hand knowledge such as eye-witness account and original documents while secondary sources constitute information such as description of an event by other than an eye-witness (Gay, 1981).

An interview guide was presented to each of the participants selected for the study when they were visited by the researcher and his research adviser early in the fall of 1986. During the initial visit, the purpose of the study was elucidated and requests were made of each person to participate in a sixty-minute person to person interview.

A telephone call was made to each respondent to schedule the interview appointment time. Specifically, the respondents were asked to share their experiences with their institution's accreditation process. The primary sources of

information consisted of the institutions' self-study reports and other necessary documents maintained in the accreditation process. The secondary sources consisted of current profiles of accreditation guidelines and procedures from books, publications of Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA), and National Association of Private, Nontraditional School and Colleges (NAPNSC), and self-study reports from other institutions.

#### Instrumentation

The interview guide, which consisted of fundamental questions regarding the accreditation process was developed with the help of four advanced graduate students at Oklahoma State University. These students had already completed Evaluation and Research Design courses and were knowledgeable about accreditation.

The purpose of such additional help was to develop an appropriate and constructive interview guide for this study.

The interview guide was designed to obtain information regarding the following issues:

1. institutional procedures followed in the accreditation process,
2. the practical insights they might have about the process,
3. initiating activities of the institutions,
4. delegation of responsibilities and tasks,

5. executive level participation.

The researcher asked follow-up questions in each of the areas to encourage elaboration of responses.

Selected personnel directly involved in the accreditation evaluations included executive level administrators, coordinators, management personnel, policy board members, steering committee chair, self-study committee chair, and data managers.

#### Pilot Study

To verify the suitability and clarity of the questions and to identify and correct any difficulties the respondents might have, the interview guide for this study was pilot tested. Six people participated in the pilot study. In addition to the group involved in preparing the guide, two other experts on accreditation processes were invited to participate in the pilot study.

Furthermore, the questions were reviewed and revised by a university professor in Speech Communications to improve clarity. Each of the pilot test participants received the interview guide. Telephone calls were made to each of the participants to solicit their responses and improving suggestions for the interview guide. All the participants responded to the pilot study. The suggestions were helpful in determining the kinds of information necessary for the

case study of this type and appropriate structure of interview questions.

### Interview

Information was obtained from each of the selected respondents, five from each of the participating institutions. They shared their experiences in institutional accreditation through the open-ended and follow-up questions. Before each interview, the participant was asked for permission to tape record the interview and was assured that his recorded comments would not be identified nor used beyond the purposes of this study. All respondents gave their consent.

### Data Analysis and Treatment

After the interviews were completed the responses were analyzed and organized by specific categories of the interview guide. The interview guide questions were under these headings:

1. Reason for Accreditation
2. Responsibilities and Tasks
3. Accreditation Procedures
4. Accreditation Requirements
5. Adjustments
6. Recommendations



The questions were adapted to reflect the peculiar role of the respondents by each respondent in the accreditation review process. The data organization reflected the established categories determined by the research question categories listed above.

Narrative summaries were organized integrating the data obtained from the three groups of respondents, executive officers, coordinators, and management personnel. A four-step process was used to construct the case study summaries:

1. Assemble the raw data
2. Construct a case summary record. The narrative summary was an integration of the raw case data which involved organizing, classifying, and editing the raw data.
3. Organizing the summaries according to the specific research question categories indicated above.
4. Write the narrative summary. The narrative summaries consist of the descriptive discussions of the data collected during the interview.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESPONSE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the responses collected during the person to person interviews with the chief executives, coordinators, and management personnel of the post-secondary proprietary institutions in this study. The interview guide responses and other information collected were analyzed and summarized according to the interview guide categories.

The purpose of this study was to document, through two case studies, the process by which post-secondary proprietary institutions in Oklahoma initiate and develop the evaluation process which leads to accreditation.

#### Narrative Case Summaries

The responses collected from each of the groups of respondents on each of the headings listed below were synthesized in the narrative case summaries that follow. The participants shared their experiences and perspectives regarding:

1. The reasons for accreditation;
2. The delegation of responsibilities and tasks;
3. The accreditation procedure;
4. The accreditation requirement;

5. The adjustment made on their institutions and or programs after the accreditation review;

6. The recommendations for effective and efficient accreditation review for similar institutions.

#### Reasons for Accreditation

Responses from the three groups (the chief executive, coordinator, and management personnel) of the two institutions in this study had common emphasis regarding major reasons for undergoing accreditation review. The chief executives of both institutions stressed that their institutions strive to protect the students' interests and achieve institutional quality. Generally, the three groups agreed that the post-secondary proprietary "institutions need money to operate," and therefore "marketing" is essential. The institutions need to attract students and help these students transfer to other colleges and universities by offering quality educational programs. One coordinator made it explicitly clear:

Accreditation means that students transcripts of credits will be accepted at other colleges and universities in Oklahoma State System of Higher Education and accorded full academic respect.

The two post-secondary proprietary institutions in this study were seeking initial accreditation from the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (NCA).

One of the institutions is accredited by the Accreditation Commission of the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools (NATTS). Its courses are approved by the Oklahoma State Accrediting Agency for veterans benefits (G.I. Bill). It is also accredited by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to offer an Associate Degree in Applied Science. Also, at the time of this study, the other institution in this study was accredited by the Oklahoma State Board of Regents for Higher Education to award Associate Degree in Applied Science, the Accreditation Commission of the Association of Independent Colleges and Schools (AICS), and its Medical Assistants program is accredited by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES). Accreditation to these proprietary institutions means "fostering excellence through the development of standards" for assessing educational effectiveness, and assuring the community and general public that the institution is, in fact, meeting an acceptable standard and living up to its mission statements. One coordinator commented:

We have to make sure that our college is meeting an acceptable standard across the nation, and assure the general public and other agencies and the community we are serving that our college has appropriate educational goals and is capable of achieving them through established conditions.

State accreditation is prerequisite and helps prepare the proprietary institutions for regional accreditation. All in all, the reason for undergoing accreditation are the

same in all respects for the two institutions. The Medical Assistant program is accredited by Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) "to assure that the Medical Assistant program meets established standards academically and administratively" to be able to offer the registration examination to graduates of the program. They offer a specific and practical educational program and "emphasize technical education in preparation for immediate job entry."

Proprietary institutions strive for "initial impetus and predominant influence for actual development" in their respective educational programs. The status of the proprietary institution has assumed a unique urgency with an increasing number of programs for training professions. In response to this societal demand, the proprietary institution seeks accreditation to prove to the general public and the community it is serving that it is, in fact, meeting established standards. The executives and the other groups interviewed agreed that "students' interests must be protected." The students of proprietary institutions should be able to transfer to other colleges and universities of accredited status, "with full academic respect accorded them." Moreover, quality educational programs would attract students to proprietary institutions. "Marketing" is therefore one major reason to seek recognition, and to those ends, the proprietary schools will do what it takes within affordable reach to be accredited.

## Delegation of Responsibilities and Tasks

The responses to this session were given with respect to the questions dealing with specific initiating steps in the evaluation review process; review committees; and the inclusion of local industries and interest groups in the initial accreditation review. The responses of the three groups (chief executives, coordinators, and data managers) focused almost entirely on the delegation of responsibilities during the self-study for initial accreditation.

The applying institutions usually take the initiative. The chief executive of the proprietary institution contacts the accrediting agency in writing first, then by personal visit to obtain the information manual. The manual furnishes standards to be met for accreditation. The criterion of the NCA requires that applying school to make a self-study: an analysis of all the activities and functions of the institution. The NCA handbook contains guidelines and furnishes standards to be met to be accredited. The institution, however, "devises procedures for making the self-study."

The initial steps followed by the institutions towards the self-study were the same. A coordinator was selected by the chief executive of the institution. To qualify for this post, one has to be knowledgeable about accreditation and evaluation, and a staff or member of the institution's

faculty. Generally, "a steering committee is formed to administer the self-study." One executive commented:

The purpose of this committee is to bring together appropriate public and other representatives to review and debate questions and issues related to claims and deeds, and make constructive recommendations which will enhance the beneficial effects of accreditation of proprietary institutions.

The steering committee may include guidance counselors, coordinators, faculty representatives and student body representatives. A general chairperson was appointed by the president to preside at all meetings of the steering committee and meetings of the entire group as the self-study progresses. Also, other review committees were formed to "look into different aspects of the accreditation demand." Examples of suggested review committees are shown on page 56. The general chairperson sees that all the committees formed later are active and effective in carrying out their assigned duties, and collects and files the committees' reports."

The steering committee members also sit as advisers to the various review committees. They see that evaluations are carried out by the review committees effectively and write progress reports of these committees.

Organizational meetings which included the total staff were held often during the self-study process. Also, included in the meetings were instructional and non-instructional administrators; guidance counselors,

TABLE I  
SUGGESTED REVIEW COMMITTEES

- 
1. Student Handbook
  2. Faculty Handbook
  3. Shop or Laboratory
  4. Teacher Qualification
  5. Professional Improvement
  6. Employment Opportunities
  7. Geographical Distribution of Students
  8. Equipment Upgrading and Replacement
  9. Long Range Expansion
  10. Job Description and Responsibilities
  11. Advisory Committee
  12. Student and Faculty Recourse Plan
  13. Evaluation of Administrative and Instructional Faculty
  14. Maintenance, Housekeeping and Security
  15. Safety Program (by Shop)
  16. General Landscaping
  17. Faculty Meeting Minutes
  18. Student Recruitment
  19. Equipment Inventory
  20. Instructional Materials Inventory
  21. Purchasing Manual (or Procedures)
  22. Scrap Book (Publicity and Special Events)
  23. State and Federal Regulations
  24. Characteristics of High Schools in Area
  25. Evening Programs
  26. Special Training Programs (MDTA, WINN, etc.)
  27. Youth Organizations
  28. School Catalog
  29. Placement and Follow-up
- 

Reference: School Shop, March 1975, p. 31.



teachers, secretaries, custodians, student body representatives, and those directly involved with the institutions. At this stage, responsibilities are delegated to advisory committees, local industries and interest groups to obtain outside views. One chief executive said: "Board of Regents from the academic community were asked how and what they think should be done for effective evaluation." Local industries said "what they would expect from the graduates and asked the committee to include them in the curriculum to suit the needs of the industries."

The department heads who helped to write the self-study report, were interviewed by the visiting team and members of the various committees. The department heads also helped in gathering the needed data to support the self-study report, checking for accuracy of information, and providing the background information of the visiting team members to the organizational meeting and steering committee. The organizational meetings, in fact, "provide the spark to carry out the self-study." Those in attendance were always "given to understand the purpose and significance of the self-study," and how they could help to effect the needed evaluation "not only with a feeling of willingness, but with a sense of objective and anxious anticipation."

## The Accreditation Procedure

The institutions under study had two approaches to accreditation; professional accreditation and regional accreditation in addition to state accreditation. The process with which this study is concerned, however, is that of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (NCA).

NCA evaluated overall capabilities of the institutions to carry out effective and quality programs in the light of their mission statements. This overall evaluation was directed to various features of the institutions and programs to determine their accreditation status.

The respondents agreed with Robinson (1984). The accreditation process includes basically four major framework: (a) institutional self-study, (b) an on-site evaluation by a team of evaluators, (c) a written report by the evaluation team concerning recommendations regarding institutional accreditation status, and (d) a constructive response to the recommendations of the visiting team by the institution.

The post secondary institutions in this study carried out the self-study of their institutions, providing the basic document in the accreditation process. The self-study is a comprehensive review of the institutions' programs, resources, and needs which was systematically developed. The report identified the institutions' strength,

weaknesses, and plans in terms of their goals. Expert judgments from outside the institutions were rendered by professional educators, local industrialists, and interest groups.

Committees were formed to look into different aspects of "the institutional programs, resources, equipment, services, instructional inventories, applicable regulations, organizations, placement and follow-up, governance, and all activities of the institution." The respondents asserted that the "self-study reflects its institution's aspirations and daily accomplishments." Robinson (1984) commented:

The self-study serves as a very basic document in the accreditation process and is the main source of information about the institution used by the visiting team. ... From the standpoint of NCA the primary purpose of the self-study is to provide an assessment of institutional quality and effectiveness. ... The NCA expects that the institutions will be mature enough to devise an objective and thorough self-analysis (pp. 8, 13).

In planning the self-study, a director or coordinator was appointed and a steering committee formed to oversee the self-study review. Usually the coordinator was very knowledgeable about accreditation and the institution. The steering committee which is the central planning committee was made up of all categories of the institution's population. "Other committees formed to look into the various aspects of the self-study review report to the steering committee," said one coordinator.

Major facets of the self-study as enumerated by Robinson (1984), almost always includes an analysis of the following areas:

1. The institutional mission statement stated goals and objectives.

Does the mission statement accurately reflect the current mission of the institution or is it outdated? Is it so broad and general that it does not provide focus for the institution? Are the stated goals and objectives of the institution realistic and compatible with the mission? Are the institutional goals and purposes appropriate to the clientele? Are purposes appropriate to the clientele? Are institutional resources adequate to achieve the goals subscribed to by the institution?

2. Governance and Administration

What is the pattern of governance and institutional decision making? What are the obligations and responsibilities of each of the elements of the institution in the decision making process? Is the pattern of decision making conducive to the attainment of institutional goals in an efficient and effective manner?

3. The Curriculum and Educational Learning Experiences

Is the curriculum appropriate to the stated goals and objectives of the institution? Is there evidence of an ongoing evaluation of the overall curriculum of the institution and within the several departments and colleges? Is the curriculum up to date? Are the necessary materials and equipment available to support the curriculum? What are the approaches to instruction and what are the evidences regarding the effectiveness of instruction? What are the requirements for degrees? Is there an adequate general education component? How are the various aspects of the curriculum interrelated?

#### 4. Institutional Resources

The resources of the institution determine to a great extent the quality of the education and learning experience provided. Resources which the institution should address in the self-study include:

##### a. Faculty

What is the institution's best estimate of the quality and competence of the faculty? Is faculty turnover too high? Are too large a number of faculty on tenure? What evidence exists to demonstrate the scholarly abilities of faculty? Teaching ability? Are faculty loads appropriate to the level of instruction being assigned? What are faculty attitudes regarding programs of the institution, administration, and conditions of employment?

##### b. Students

Are the ability levels and other characteristics of students appropriate for the types and levels of programs being offered by the institution? What evidence exists that students admitted succeed in programs? What is the retention rate of students who are admitted? What are student's attitudes about instruction, and the institution in general?

##### c. Student Services

Are counselling, health services, placement services, housing, and activity programs appropriate to meet the needs of students? (The range and type of services necessary vary, of course, with the type of institution.) Are admission policies and procedures appropriate and effective? Are student records accurate, thorough, and reflective of consistent administration of institutional academic policies? Are Student Services understood as supplementing direct educational

services such as instruction and enhancing the training environment?

d. Library

Are library holdings appropriate to support the academic program of the institution? Is the library being used appropriately by students and faculty? Is the physical facility for the library sufficiently large and functional to accommodate its purpose?

e. Physical Plant

Is physical plant of the institution adequate or does the conditions severely limit the extent to which programs can be effectively operated?

f. Financial Resources and Budget

To what extent are financial resources available sufficient to support the programs of the institution? Is efficient use being made of financial resources in support of instruction? Are financial resources stable to ensure a continuity of programs? Do budget preparation and control, audit reports and accounting procedures reflect practices for colleges and universities? Does the budget express in financial terms the plans of the institution for the immediate future?

5. Long Range Planning .

Given the context of the present condition of the institution as provided through a careful analysis of the above areas, what are the projections and plans over the next five to ten years? What strategies will be used to further strengthen areas of high quality and improve areas identified as being weak? (p. 15-17)

If a person is a member of two or three review committees he learns more about the operations of the institutions and feels more associated with the entire

study. Each review committee elected its own chairperson and recorder and had an in depth study and report on its area of concentration. Each committee was provided with a copy of the evaluation manual.

General meetings were held quite often during the review process where the reports of each committee were submitted to the steering committee. The steering committee examined the reports, edited them, and incorporated them into the self-study synthesis. The documented self-study was reviewed by the on-site evaluation team.

The team was made up of professionals from public institutions. The on-site evaluation was "a scrutinization of the institution's self-study in terms of its educational philosophy, purposes, and objectives as against the accrediting agency's established criteria and standards," Heusser (1982, p. 3). The evaluation team visited with representatives of the entire school population. The recommendations of the visiting team members were taken seriously. During the on-site visit "the evaluation team members seek information, factual data, qualitative impressions" from various sources. They verify the self-study report.

According to Robinson (1984), during the course of the site visit, the team attempts to assess the following:

1. Institutional governance
2. Institutional administration

3. Instructional programs, curriculum, and teaching effectiveness
4. Faculty and faculty life
5. Student and student life
6. Financial resources
7. Physical plant
8. Long Range planning
9. Institution mission, goals, and objectives

"None of these areas are evaluated in isolation (p. 21)."

The evaluation team's report is usually written by the chairperson. The report focuses on the institutional characteristics, policy and operating principles, specific limitations and weaknesses that must be strengthened before being accredited.

Heusser (1982) further emphasizes that the team members evaluate the institution as a whole. To this, a team member should thoroughly examine the following areas as they pertain to the institution:

1. Educational and administration facilities;
2. Advisement and instructional procedures;
3. Instructional and examination materials;
4. Degree program structure and requirements;
5. Self-assessment procedures;
6. Record keeping procedures;
7. Admission's policy and procedures;



8. Student follow-up studies and responses;
9. Follow-up to students record requests;
10. Provisions for student services;
11. Fiscal policy, procedures, and overall financial conditions (p. 41).

The visiting team's report is evaluated by a reviewing committee representing the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. Orlans, et al. (1975) specify that the final step in the process is a subsequent decision by the agency's accrediting commission, which is based upon the self-study, the team report, and any other information available to grant, deny, or renew accreditation for a given period, and which signifies the institution does, or does not, meet the agency's standards.

If the accreditation committee initially recommends that the accreditation should be denied, the institution may elect to accept the nonaccreditation recommendation, to request an interview, or to elect to request another survey of a consultation and educational visit that may result in a different recommendation. Any initial recommendation of the Accrediting Committee that accreditation should be denied entitles the school to appeal the nonaccreditation recommendation in accordance with stipulated procedures (Millard, 1982). Accreditation is expensive both in time and money.

## Accreditation Requirements

The North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools has other requirements which institutions seeking initial accreditation must meet; apart from the "procedural requirements as "submit an application" or "prepare a self-study" (Petersen, 1979). Their requirements emphasize quality for proprietary institutions to adequately serve their promotional and informational purposes, and training of subprofessional aids for the established professions (Orlans, et al., 1975).

Since accreditation is a mark of status, the proprietary institutions must meet the initial accreditation requirements to countenancing the accreditation.

According to Petersen, institutional eligibility requirements for initial accreditation by NCA includes the applying institution having:

- A chief administrative officer;
- A governing board that is representative of the public interest;
- Graduated at least one class;
- Offer one or more educational programs at least one year in length or the equivalent with clear objectives and a statement for achievement;
- Have developed a survey or evidence of basic planning for development of the institution.

The NCA usually send standards and guidelines in the manual to the applying institution. One official described it as: "standards thought to be essential in evaluating educational effectiveness and institutional honesty in achieving its objectives." The evaluation guidelines direct great attention to quality assessment and institutional goals and objectives. An institution is accredited after the accrediting association has reviewed the appropriateness of its stated objectives; the adequacy of its resources and programs to achieve those objectives; and evidence that it is indeed attaining the objectives (Petersen, 1979).

The chief executives noted that "stability is important to be accredited." Institutions are required some few year operation duration before applying for accreditation." Also, stability is evidenced in "reasonable faculty turnover," "adequate student enrollment," "continuity of effective leadership," and "sound financial base and management." All these are necessary conditions of eligibility due to the volatile nature of proprietary institutions.

As noted earlier, the two institutions in this study have state accreditation. One of the Schools is also accredited by the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools (NATTS). The Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) accredited the Medical Assistant program at the other. These agencies which accredit

primarily proprietary institutions are very similar in their statements and purpose. They strive "to maintain, stimulate, and improve educational quality" in addition to performing a public service through insistence upon proper ethical business practices (Petersen, 1979). These agencies also require a sound financial base, effective leadership, stability of the institution, and sufficient student enrollment to accredit an applying proprietary institution. Two years of successful operation and at least one graduating class is required by NATTS to accredit an institution.

The accrediting agencies focus primarily on quality rather than quantity to promote and maintain high educational standards. "Attainment of Objectives" is emphasized by these agencies according to one coordinator. Management and Administrative Services are scrutinized for a clear-line of responsibility within departments and services and between departments and administrative staff.

Supplemental documentation to the self-study were required by NATTS from the applying institution. These included summary of financial reports, school catalog, handbook for faculty and students, operation policies and procedures, and all printouts by the institution. ABHES, in addition to the self-study report also required lists of staff and faculty, samples of advertisements, annual audit report, copy of fee refund policy, list of equipments,

enrollment statistics, graduate placement statistics, and everything that will equate claims and deeds. Students and personnel were interviewed and their records reviewed in all cases.

All the officials agreed that the documentation provided to NCA, State, and other accrediting agencies was very helpful in conveying their statement of purpose and the quality of programs offered. In the words of one academic official:

In fact, I found out that we are doing a lot of things all right. The documentation we provided was candid and comprehensive. They were thorough, and diligently documented.

The NCA and the specialized/professional accrediting agencies though differ in scope and terms of accreditation have the same purpose and objective. Their major concerns in accreditation is improvement of the educational quality and establishment and "maintenance of high educational standards and ethical business practices "in the proprietary institutions. However, the purview of their accrediting activities makes the great difference between regional and professional accreditation. Educational quality improvement and the maintenance of ethical business practices are manifested in the evaluation of financial management, administrative services, admission, and tuition policies and procedures. The agencies requirements in the evaluation of the proprietary institutions reflect their standards in quality education.

## Adjustments

The initial accreditation review provided a vehicle for institutional self-assessment and increased the knowledge of faculty and staff of the proprietary institutions about accreditation practices. The officials interviewed very thoroughly described the initial accreditation review as "enriching" by setting the standards of quality the proprietary institutions must meet. It provides an opportunity for the institutions to evaluate the quality of its programs, services offered and identifies areas needing improvement. One coordinator said:

The initial review gave our institution a chance to evaluate the educational services it is performing and on how to improve. Also, it provided an opportunity to establish in the minds of staff, faculty, and students the mission and purpose of our institution. In fact, it was a moment of introspection on a comprehensive activity of our institution.

In some areas the evaluation review brought about changes in policy. One of the institutions had a change in policy regarding the student health forms as students did not have them before the initial accreditation review. It was suggested to the other to "have an across the board fee policy rather than flexibility" on fee charges. All the officials interviewed said that the initial accreditation process was a means for the proprietary institution to reflect on its services. It assisted the institutions to

sprightly "define all areas needing improvement and systematically strengthened the quality of our programs."

Also, the self-study provided an excellent opportunity for improvement of institutional operation through improved communication. One management personnel commented:

Through the self-study report, we were able to learn more about ourselves and the services we are providing as an institution. Faculty and student awareness and interaction increased and became more supportive to the initial accreditation process. The faculty and staff heard the view points of outsiders regarding institutional improvement.

The comments of the visiting team lent force to significant changes in program structure and consideration. Their recommendation at one of the institutions was evident. One official commented:

The NCA advised that if we really want to be a nationally recognized junior college, we should work towards awarding Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. Right now we are awarding Associate of Applied Science which is a technical degree. We took the advice seriously and started the process. We have discussed it in our general education committee meetings, academic department director council, in the faculty meetings, and the College gathering board meetings. We have applied to the Oklahoma Board of Regents to begin the process. We are hopeful that we will be granted permission to do that by the next time we go for accreditation.

Such recommendations also significantly changed the catalogs and increased awareness and responsibility. Consequently, they will "be offering more liberal arts courses." This will enable "hopeful students transfer smoothly to four year institutions with more credits."

Awarding accreditation status to proprietary institution is a significant event. However, initial accreditation review is incurred at great cost and labor. The review requires "persons whose formal education, work experience, and insight call for appropriate compensation." The institution would incur major expenses in required development areas after the review "as well as the self-study process with printing and reproduction costs to be met throughout." Consultation services obtained by the institution in initial accreditation review preparation was a need, and expensive. Also, daily operational expenses were incurred by the applying institutions in response to sustaining the accrediting agencies and visiting teams inquiries. Additional costs could be incurred in "attending to the many details of planning, assignments, arrangements, and travelling needed for board and commission meetings." The accrediting costs, direct and hidden, are ultimately borne by the applying institution in all cases.

The accrediting process, however, is not without problems. Some of the questions posed to the proprietary institutions seeking initial recognition by the accrediting agencies were on how to balance educational quality with profit. "They believe that it is hard for an institution to provide quality programs when it is profit-seeking," said one coordinator. In a particular case, the visiting team



lent gravity to "what one person said and incorporated it into their report."

Information was a problem dealt with in the initial accreditation review process. In seeking initial recognition from NATTS, what was needed, in fact, was "not much paperwork and supporting instruments," said one chief executive. All the persons interviewed agreed that it is a need to "obtain adequate information and guidelines from the NCA" to carryout the initial accreditation review process.

Another problem encountered by one of the institutions in this study was with the visiting team from NCA. All the visiting team members were from public institutions and had problems understanding the proprietary institution. One coordinator commented:

One of the persons assigned to the visiting team who was from a proprietary institution could not come; and the one that replaced him was from a public institution. All of our visiting team members were from public institutions. So that was a problem because apart form the chairman, none of them quite understood proprietary schools and they did not understand the technical degree.

In many cases, the visiting team members are not from like institutions. "If they were, the initial accreditation review process would be simplified without limiting its effectiveness."

In summary, the benefits of the evaluation review leading to accreditation of the proprietary institution are great. The assurance and consistency between claims and deeds were received, reviewed, and improved where needs

were. It "focused on a single goal and mission objective" of the proprietary institution. In all cases, the initial accreditation review brought the staff, faculty, and students together and improved communication within the school. It reinforced the needs, identified existing problems, and helped in solving them. It is nice to know that despite certain constraints inherent in the proprietary institutions in quality program offerings and profit making, the accrediting agencies evaluating the institutions for initial accreditation encourage programmatic flexibility.

The initial accreditation process is an institutional self-assessment and provides a vehicle for institutional change. One coordinator summed it up: "Though it is rigorous and expensive process, it is worth every demand it places on us." It is "the best self-improvement goal oriented process." Accreditation indeed is an expensive venture.

Provision of adequate information and guidelines and selecting visiting team members from like institutions for initial recognition review will simplify the process.

#### Recommendations for Improving Initial Accreditation Process

Each of the authorities was asked to make recommendations for improving the initial accreditation process. They recommended for efficient and effective

initial review that: 1) more information should be obtained at the initial contact with NCA and not less, 2) the self-study should be a goal-setting operation with time-table, and 3) the institution should have visiting team members from like institutions.

All the officials recommended that the NCA should be contacted "first by letter writing, then face to face visit." This will enable the NCA to initially evaluate the institutions' intentions and actual commitment to initial accreditation. One coordinator recommended that in addition to obtaining the manual for evaluation from the NCA, an NCA consultant should also be assigned to work with the applying institution as soon as the initial contact is made and taken seriously.

Furthermore, the personnel from the proprietary institution considering initial accreditation are advised to attend the three-day workshop offered once a year by NCA. The objective of the workshop is to give information regarding the needs and responses to the demands of accreditation.

All respondents agreed that the self-study process should be goal-setting with time tables. It is "a time consuming and expensive venture." It is necessary to "bring in people from business and industry," "those who do not carry their biases with them to adversely affect their true judgment," in the initial accreditation review process.

Their contributions would be helpful in identifying problem areas and consequently lend constructive improvement ideas.

Once the self-study has started, one official said, "read the self-study reports and become so familiar with it that it becomes part of your everyday operating procedure and you'll know when you're ready." The respondents agreed that everyone in the institution should be "well informed" about the institutions' intentions to undergo accreditation and "what they should do to help."

The respondents commented that the visiting team members should come from "same like institutions. Most of the visiting team members, quite often, are from public institutions and have problems understanding proprietary institutions."

It is clear from these recommendations that initial accreditation could pose a problem if the applying institution lacks the knowledge of what must be done to be initially recognized for excellence. It is therefore necessary to obtain adequate information from the accrediting agency from the initial contact. Agency consultants are expensive but should be sought after by the applying proprietary institution. They should be contracted to work with the coordinators and data managers of the initial accreditation review.

Moreover, institutions should request from NCA that at least some of the visiting team members for the initial

accreditation come from same like institutions to honestly evaluate proprietary institutions.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to document through two case studies the process by which post secondary proprietary institutions in Oklahoma initiate and develop the evaluation process which leads to accreditation. This study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the process of initial accreditation of the post secondary proprietary institutions.
2. To ascertain accreditation requirements of the institutions.
3. Identify some selected basic accreditation problems the institutions encountered in the initial accreditation review process.
4. Examine how the institutions responded to the needs of accreditation.
5. Determine primary evaluation procedures leading to accreditation of the institutions.
6. Develop documentation of the review process as a case study.

## Design and Procedure for the Study

Through the use of an interview guide, the researcher collected data in a face to face interview with the post-secondary proprietary institutions' chief executives, coordinators, and management personnel. The data collected were synthesized in narrative case summaries as the respondents shared their experiences and perspectives regarding:

1. The reasons for accreditation;
2. The delegation of responsibilities and tasks;
3. The accreditation procedure;
4. The accreditation requirement;
5. The adjustments made on their institutions and or programs after the accreditation review;
6. The recommendations for effective and efficient accreditation review for similar institutions.

The design and methodology for this study involved the following tasks: (a) selecting the appropriate institution for this study, (b) developing questionnaire, (c) validating the instruments, (d) establishing a procedure for administering the questionnaire, and (e) establishing a method for analysis and distribution of the data collected.

## Summary of Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study were reported and described in the context of the research questions. Each of the sessions dealt specifically with the interview guide perspective to achieving the objectives for the study.

Section one was to identify the reasons why post secondary proprietary institutions undergo accreditation. The three groups of respondents reported that institutional integrity and student protection are among the major reasons to seek and hold accreditation. The chief executives of the institutions eloquently said that "marketing" is extremely important for any post-secondary proprietary institution. The institution needs money to operate. To attract students, therefore, the institution has to prove to the general public that it is meeting established standards and guidelines of accreditation.

Section two was designed to obtain the respondents perceptions on "the delegation of responsibilities and tasks" during the initial accreditation review process. The responses showed that everyone in the institution was well informed about the initial accreditation review of their institution and what he should do to help. The chief executives, coordinators, management personnel, faculty and staff play the greatest role in the accreditation review. These formed committees that reviewed and debated questions



and issues concerning "claims and deeds" in response to initial accreditation requirements. The head of departments and the appointed chairpersons worked closely together in writing the self-study reports. Responsibilities were also delegated to advisory committee, interest groups, and local industries to obtain outside suggestions and recommendations.

The third session focused on the "Accreditation Procedures." It is understood that after the initial contact of the accrediting agency, the institutions were told to conduct a self-study of their institutions. The focus of the self-study is on a comprehensive review of the institutions' programs, resources, and needs. The rigorous self-study provides a means for institutional self-improvement if implemented accordingly. Robinson states that the accreditation process includes (1) an institutional self-study, (2) an on-site visit evaluation by a team of evaluators, (3) a written report by evaluation team regarding recommendations and accreditation status of the institution. These steps were evident in the post-secondary proprietary institution in this study.

Accreditation Requirements were discussed in session four. In addition to meeting the procedural requirements such as submitting application and conducting the institutional self-study, the accrediting commissions have eligibility conditions that must be met for initial

accreditation. To maintain a high quality of education and ethical business practices by the post-secondary proprietary institutions a great number of standards and guidelines that are essential to educational effectiveness are included by the regional accrediting agencies for initial recognition. These may appear rigorous but they are all for consumer protection and institutional improvement. Usually great attention is focused on those practices that are thought to be important in the quality assessment.

Section five focused on the adjustments made on the institutions and or programs after the accreditation review. It was found out that the initial accreditation review provides a vehicle for institutional quality awareness. All the officials interviewed agreed that the review was "enriching" to the institution. the review identified areas of weakness needing improvement. It was not uncommon to have changes in or establishment of policies where needed after initial accreditation review. In one of the institutions in this study, there were significant changes in program structure and consideration after the visiting team was on campus. This shows how seriously the recommendations of the visiting team are taken and the gravity of their comments during initial accreditation review.

There is however, a need to recognize that the accrediting process is not without problems in post

secondary proprietary institutions. Generally, the proprietary institution is seen as a "profit-seeking" institution managed by astute businessmen. So, how to balance profit and quality education was a problematic question encountered by the institutions. In one of the Institutions, adjustment in tuition policy was recommended and taken seriously. Furthermore, lack of adequate information was a problem in the initial accreditation review process. One of the chief executives agreed that it is necessary to obtain adequate information and guidelines from the NCA in the process of initial accreditation. In addition, the visiting team selection posed a problem. All the visiting team members in the institutions under study were from public institutions. This was a unique problem because one coordinator said "the team members could not quite understand proprietary institutions and the technical degree." This is a barrier to an efficient and effective accreditation review process.

Section six is directed to recommendations for improving the initial accreditation review process. The recommendations for effective and efficient accreditation review process focused on obtaining adequate information from NCA, making the self-study a goal-setting operation, and having visiting teams from same like institutions. If the applying institution lacks the well informed personnel and the awareness of what must be done to be accredited, the

initial accreditation process could be a frustrating effort. It was reaffirmed by all the authorities interviewed that the visiting team should come from same like institutions to adequately evaluate proprietary institutions without sacrificing quality.

### Conclusion

The three groups interviewed saw the initial accreditation process as a way of establishing institutional legitimacy in its claims. Undoubtedly accreditation remains a need to have by the post-secondary proprietary institution to prove to the serving community and general public that it is meeting established standards and guidelines. The review process provides a vehicle for institutional self-assessment. It provides an excellent opportunity for the proprietary institution to have a careful systematic analysis of itself.

One of the most probable reasons why post secondary proprietary institutions seek and hold accreditation is "marketing." The institutions need money to operate and consequently, must attract a good number of students. From this view, accreditation, especially regional accreditation seems the best profiting mechanism to achieve acceptance by prospective students and other institutions. To attract the students is one thing. Institutions must keep them in part by striving to strengthen the quality of their educational

programs. This can be achieved in part through the rigorous accreditation review process. The students' internal and external academic interest must therefore be protected.

The self-study by itself is not perceived as a problem but rather as a process of institutional improvement. It directs great attention to a comprehensive review of the institutions' programs, resources, and needs. It identifies areas of strength and weakness that need improvement. The institutions in this study took the self-study seriously and the recommendations of the visiting team.

It is reasonable to conclude from this study that the institutions clearly understood all of the costs of accreditation; direct and hidden costs. The direct costs in making the institution more open to the public, including the spring boards of institutional policies and funding. The financial records were available for public inspection during the initial review process; not all corporations are fully willing to make proprietary information available for the public and their competitors to examine.

Furthermore, it is reassuring to know that professionals who have not previously undergone regional accreditation procedures, and lack adequate knowledge about accreditation, learned their way through in their initial accreditation. It was a learning process.

Moreover, the initial accreditation process was a major force in providing institutional change. It influenced

changes in student requirement polices, tuition policy, and re-evaluation of "claims and deeds" to express to the general public that the institution is meeting standards.

#### Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study. The researcher strongly supports the recommendations by experienced professionals presented in Chapter IV:

1. More information regarding accreditation procedures and guidelines should be obtained at the initial contact with NCA and not less. The lack of adequate information to carry out the evaluation review process for initial accreditation could be embarrassingly frustrating.

2. The self-study should be a goal-setting operation with time tables. The evaluation review leading to accreditation centers around the self-study. The self-study therefore, should integrate the institutional philosophy and programs to equate "claims and deeds" in meeting standards of quality and institutional integrity.

3. Most of all, the institution should have visiting team members from same like institutions. In most, as in these cases, the evaluation team members are entirely from public institutions who do not quite understand the proprietary institutions and their technical degrees. It is therefore of great importance that the visiting team members

include people from proprietary institutions for efficient evaluation without immolating standards and quality.

4. It is recommended that the post secondary institution undergo special/professional accreditation first, before regional accreditation. This will help the institution to adequately prepare for the NCA self-study review. When adequate knowledge about accreditation procedures is lacking, learning one's way through could be cumbersome.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS  
FOR THE EXECUTIVE

Interview Guide Questions  
For the Executive

Perspective on Reasons for Accreditation

- A. What were your major reasons to undergo accreditation review?
- B. What does your mission statement relate to your reasons for seeking accreditation?

Delegation of Responsibilities and Tasks

- A. What specific initiating steps did you take to begin the evaluation review process?
- B. In what ways were there delegation of responsibilities to include advisory committees, local industries, interest groups, etc?
- C. What roles did your department heads and other administrators play in the evaluation review process?

Perspective on Accreditation Procedure

- A. What management controls or regulatory factors were exercised during the accreditation review process?
- C. What practical insights did you gain regarding the accreditation review process?

Perspective on Accreditation Requirement

- A. What kinds of supplemental documentation to the self study were required by the accrediting agencies?

- B. In your opinion, what kinds of judgments were made concerning the documentation that was submitted?
- C. What kinds of further documentation, if any, was required by the accreditation agency after the visitation team was on campus?

#### Perspective on Adjustments

- A. After the evaluation review, were there any changes made in program offerings or program structure? If yes, briefly describe.
- B. What were major problems, if any, encountered in the evaluation review process?
- C. What is the benefit analysis of the evaluation review leading to accreditation of your institution?

#### Recommendations

- A. Based on your experience with the evaluation review, what recommendations would you suggest that would make the initial accreditation process more effective and efficient for institutions in similar situations?
- B. If you were to suggest methods of obtaining adequate information regarding initial accreditation by proprietary institutions, what suggestions would you make?



APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS  
FOR THE COORDINATOR

Interview Guide Questions  
For the Coordinator

Perspective on Reasons for Accreditation

- A. What were your major reasons to undergo accreditation review?
- B. From which accreditation agencies are you seeking accreditation?
- C. How does your mission statement relate to your reasons for seeking accreditation?

Delegation of Responsibilities and Tasks

- A. What specific initiating steps did you take to begin the evaluation review process?
- B. In what ways were there delegation of responsibilities to include advisory committees, local industries, interest groups, etc?
- C. What review committees were formed to look into different aspects of the accreditation process?
- D. What tasks were assigned to these committees?
- E. What roles did your department heads and other administrators play in the evaluation review process?

Perspective on Accreditation Procedure

- A. Would you briefly describe the steps you followed in the accreditation review process?

- B. What management controls or regulatory factors were exercised during the accreditation review process?
- C. What practical insights did you gain regarding the accreditation review process?

#### Perspective on Accreditation Requirement

- A. What kinds of supplemental documentation to the self-study were required by the accrediting agencies?
- B. In your opinion, what kinds of judgments were made concerning the documentation that was submitted?
- C. What kinds of further documentation, if any, was required by the accreditation agency after the visitation team was on campus?

#### Perspective on Adjustments

- A. After the evaluation review, were there any changes made in program offerings or program structure? If yes, briefly describe.
- B. What is the benefit analysis of the evaluation review leading to accreditation of your institution?
- C. What kinds of further documentation, if any, was required by the accreditation association(s) after the visiting team visited your campus?
- D. What were major problems, if any, encountered in the evaluation review process?

Recommendations

- A. Based on your experience with the evaluation review, what recommendations would you suggest that would make the initial accreditation process more effective and efficient for institutions in similar situations?
  
- B. If you were to suggest methods of obtaining adequate information regarding initial accreditation by proprietary institutions, what suggestions would you make?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS  
FOR MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

Interview Guide Questions  
For Management Personnel

- A. What were your major reasons to undergo accreditation review?
- B. What review committees were formed to look into different aspects of the accreditation process?
- C. What task(s) were assigned to these committees?
- D. What roles did your department heads and other administrators play in the evaluation review process?
- E. What management controls or regulatory factors were exercised during the accreditation review process?
- F. What practical insights did you gain regarding the accreditation review process?
- G. In what way were there delegation of responsibilities to include advisory committees, local industries, interest groups, etc?

Perspective on Accreditation Requirement

- A. What kinds of supplemental documentation to the self-study were required by the accrediting agencies?
- B. In your opinion, what kinds of judgments were made concerning the documentation that was submitted?
- C. What kinds of further documentation, if any, was required by the accreditation agency after the visitation team was on campus?

Perspective on Adjustments

- A. After the evaluation review, were there any changes made in program offerings or program structure? If yes, briefly describe.
  
- B. What is the benefit analysis of the evaluation review leading to accreditation of your institution?
  
- C. What were major problems, if any, encountered in the evaluation review process?

VITA

HYACINTH ONUNGWA ANUCHA

Candidate for the Degree of  
Master of Science

THESIS: A LIMITED CASE STUDY OF INITIAL ACCREDITATION  
PROCESSING IN POST-SECONDARY PROPRIETARY COLLEGES

MAJOR FIELD: Technical Education

BIOGRAPHICAL:

Personal Data: Born in Eziala Nsulu, Imo State,  
Nigeria, June 20, 1959, the son of Phillip and  
Agnes Anucha.

Education: Completed primary school education at  
Community School, Eziala; received high school  
education from Community Secondary School, Nbwasi,  
Imo State, 1978; received Associate in Applied  
Science Degree from Milwaukee Area Technical  
College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1981; received  
Bachelor of Science Degree in Technical Education  
from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater,  
Oklahoma, 1983; completed requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree at Oklahoma State  
University, December, 1986.