



## Transcriptions

### Integrity of Method & Objective, Part 2

Ted Ward

**Annotation:** *ACCESS*, meeting jointly with the AABC Annual Meeting, Orlando, FL, February 17-19, 1994. (*ACCESS* now known as The Association of Christian Distance Education; AABC now known as Association for Biblical Higher Education). Used with permission. Ted Ward is responding to group reports. Most of the reporting deals with the increasing receptivity of accreditation agencies toward extension education and the concern about the difference between pastors' and lay persons' perceptions of distance education.



I'm going to relinquish my microphone here to someone speaking for the A group. Now you're free to do any number of things, except use up all the time. What we'd really like to have is some sharing of your insights about this problem, both in terms of how it emerges in the case, or cases, that you've looked at most closely; and what sorts of things can be done within the institutional frameworks that you operate. And, if I could ask you, Jim, to be number one here, we can go for it.

*We had a number of schools that were faced with the issue of measuring comparability so that it would satisfy specifically accreditation and state licensing requirements and how to get through that because you're trying to be very innovative. You're utilizing the experiential context so the learner while satisfying accreditation standards. The one that we particularly looked at was the case of the Greek completion program at Crown College that they are going through. But it was also a situation that had been faced by at least three other schools one of which was utilized in an interesting approach in which they first surveyed all the churches and asked what was needed there; developed a program that would be appropriate, and then found that the AABC would not allow them to offer credit for it because*

*they had insufficient library resources at the different churches where they were going to provide this education. So it manifested itself in enough ways that we looked at some of the responses we could take to this situation. One of which was forget accreditation, just go ahead and do it anyway, which is what is being done in one situation. And they're going ahead and just offering life experience for that. That is one possible solution.*

*Another possible solution would be to re-define what we mean by comparability. It could be either maintain the same standards and seek to show how you are going to maintain the comparability in the other areas, or you come up with totally different program standards.*

*Another area that we found would be necessary would be to articulate and defend the integrity of the program and that would involve winning the approval of the accrediting association, of your faculty, and of your administration; that one of the difficulties that often creeps up in accrediting associations is, well, they're somewhat structuralist: They just care about the method and the process, but the content doesn't worry them as much. If you write your mission statement and your program goals and show how you're reaching those program goals, they will, in most part, leave you alone. But if they are picking up the idea that some of your faculty are distrusting your program or the administration is not wholeheartedly behind it or something, that's the weak link and that's the chink in the armor and they'll start challenging. So you need to win the approval, articulate, and defend your program and how you're going to meet those needs.*

*Speaking of meeting needs, we talked about assessment tools and to ensure the comparability is really to assure, not so much the comparability, but the fact that you are meeting your program missions. And that might require new assessment tools because you should be having new objectives and new situations. You should take a survey of the needs and show how your program would meet those needs. And you should take attitudinal surveys and summative evaluations to show how your programs are being met, and that's one of the ways in which to satisfy this.*

Ted?

Let me put the mic on, first. That's very short, too. Before we let Jim get away from here are there comments or questions that he should stay here and try to deal with?

*One thing I thought of as you were talking about reading through this was the field experience and not having enough resources. I think you mentioned library resources. I know we're terribly competitive, but in this group could not we loan each other access to our libraries in some limited fashion, obviously, to meet that need? And if somebody's offering a class in Chicago, can they use Trinity's library as their excuse for accreditation?*

*[Jim] One of the things we found with our contacts with accrediting associations is sharing is looked at as being very beneficial, very necessary. It's not being as closed as had been previously. But that's always to be looked at secondarily because they look at your program as being on the good rapport that you keep with the other institutions. So they encourage sharing and mutuality in that, but that you still have to have sufficient resources yourself to maintain the program if no one else comes aboard. One of the things that we just did this past year was we got our library on computer so that all of our independent study students can access the card catalogue through modem toll free; can order any book that they want toll free through the email. Also we have a computer at each one of our extension sites, but we have that in addition to local relationships with libraries. But Higher Education Chronicle recently had on their back page on "A Point of View"—maybe it's a year-and-a-half, two years ago—their recognition that we're now in an electronic age and we shouldn't be spending all of our money trying to get additional books, but rather put the money in how to get those books around and delivery methods.*

*[Audience member question] On the library, maybe somebody's here from Seminary of the East. Ted, can you tell us how they dealt with the library issue? Are you familiar with their program?*

[Ted] But that gets us a little afield. I'm not sure I want to get into the Seminary of the East kinds of solutions yet, but.

*But I'm just talking about the resources.*

Why don't you say what you think is most significant about that?

*They are accomplishing apparently an effective program based in a church that obviously would not have seminary quality holdings.*

But the issue is the network of churches and access to other resource bases, yes. Actually, I think Jim has put a finger on two or three very vital matters in this. It's not just the theme that we designated here, but that's alright. We're not going to police anybody into themes. But the thing that he's talked about, it seems to me, is related particularly to what you do when you want to get things to happen in the field that seem to threaten accreditation standards. There was a time when it was hard to define institutional cooperation without having it seem somewhat like a threat to your accreditation, but now the associations are thoroughly behind that sort of thing. So there are some much better answers than there used to be.

The issue here, it seems to me though, that we need to think more about what we do in our field experience components of extension, so I still think that we have to ask that question, too. What, in distance learning—what are we really doing with field experience itself other than, in many cases, overlooking it? Thank you. This group has made us a great contribution.

Your remark on, "First of all, maybe we ought to forget accreditation," I think it's very good advice that you forget accreditation until you get squared away with what it is you're trying to accomplish. In other words, if you always start with accreditation and accreditation standards, what you're actually doing is starting with the floor because accreditation standards are not dreams, ideals, and visions. They are floor. And, for some of us, they are stringent floors at certain points because they want the hardwood polished a certain way. But the fact is it's still floor and we need to think beyond the floor and then come back and ask the question how do we couch this in terms that make it more understandable to those that are preoccupied about accreditation standards? You see, sometimes if you start off in the negative, you will stay on the negative. You start on the defensive, you will stay on the defensive. And let's face it, one of the things that accreditation assures is that no one will do anything very creative very fast without incurring the wrath of the other institutions. And I'm very cynical about it. I'm very cynical about it because, as a matter of fact, what has happened in so many cases is that institutions have virtually forgotten their mission while trying to fulfill the expectations of an accrediting association. And if one puts it well and one knows how to make it strong in the same ways that some of the unassailed universities make their extension/distance learning strong, it's very likely that we can find that we've got all sorts of possibilities; some of which we haven't even well-tapped because we're not aware they're there.

I would recommend that those of you who are engaged in higher education degrees or in extension education degrees or adult learning, or so forth, spend some time looking at the traditions and the history of some of the institutions that do a lot of extension for whom the accrediting

association doesn't even give a second glance at their extension because it's understood; it's within the pattern of things.

Then the other point you made with reference to, maybe we ought to re-define comparability. That is an absolute winner. Because when comparability, and that's the word that almost always shows up, has to be comparable. Well, the word is comparable. You have to be able to compare it. And we ought to compare things in terms of positives and negatives. It is 'better than' in these respects; it is 'not as strong as' in these respects. And if we're clear on mission, many of the respects in which extension and distance learning can be stronger are matters closer to mission. And this is one generalization that I'd like to give you that you can just take home and put in a bank: accrediting today is much more cognizant of the mission of the institution than it has ever been. Much more cognizant, concerned, and committed to finding at the bottom-line a narrowly, clearly defined mission statement. And then the question is are you operating within your mission? And if you're operating within your mission, you almost can use *that* nowadays as the defensive wall around whatever it is that you're trying to do—so long as you're going at it wisely, carefully, and with good resources which don't always have to be campus-based resources.

Okay, let's go to the B set. We have, what is it, three B groups? Let's get a B group on the mike here for a moment. Thanks, Henry.

*We had a number of different issues that came up and the one we chose to deal with is a relatively new distance education program. The main institution is in the southeast here and their challenge is a distance program surveying the northwestern United States primarily in Wyoming and Idaho. And the problems that they face are too much distance. In those states, the churches that they serve and the people in the churches are widely dispersed and don't have a lot of natural contact with each other. They have a sense of isolation within the denominational group or denominational groups who are essentially in a maintenance mode as far as thinking about themselves as churches are concerned.*

*Also, the pastors and lay people that they're targeting have some possible sense of insecurity about their own educational background and so they face those challenges. And they also face the challenge of a relatively new program. We discussed things that we felt needed to be done. One is a real clear sense of what the goals of this program are so that they can be articulated and communicated. And as we discussed them, it became apparent that even the best goals need to be refined even more and really focused.*

*And the other major thing that needed to be done is data-collection. With the vast distance between the parent institution and the extension sites, a lot of assumptions are made. And we saw this data-collection as informing the goals, and the goals informing the type of data-collection that need to be done.*

*Some of the solutions for these group of pastors and lay people in in training were projects and activities in the learning process that were oriented to having them deal with the significant others or significant groups that they deal with. One of the challenges that's faced here is isolationism and this maintenance mode. How do you get them to interact? You need to collect data. To what extent will they permit you to interact? But have them interact with the people that are significant with the other churches, with those folks around about them.*

*And then a number of suggestions. We do have electronics available and can build that into the planning. To use the telephone. To use simple technologies. To use audiotapes as means of interaction. To create all vehicles that one can use. And also, probably, to have a person within the institution that they can interact with. And also not a mentor that they interact with necessarily, but maybe more of a peer in their own church or church context where you*

*structure interactions. We all know that peer learning is maybe as valid, and maybe more valid than many types; but to have someone that they interact with so that we're not only dealing in the cognitive area.*

Super. Thanks. Henry's on the floor here. Let's see if there are any comments or questions that others would care to raise at this point. We do have some other B groups and maybe this would be a good time to hear from them. Are you a spokesperson for another B group? Any questions for Henry before we let him get away?

I'd like to underline one thing that Henry said particularly. Toward the last, Henry was talking about project work within courses and I've often worked with individual faculty on this question of increasing the amount of social interaction in their course. When a professor says, but I've got so much I want them to read and so much I want them to know; I often say why do you want them to know that? Because they need to be in a position to know those things so they can inform others and preach well, and so forth. And I say, well, wouldn't it be nice, somewhere along the line, for students to have some sense of how far away from what generally people think about something, the real data are? In other words, would it be a feasible project to say, as you're reading about this thing, take the following three questions and ask them of somebody? And then compare what they're telling you with what you're finding in the literature about this.

One of the biggest problems that I see in today's pastors is that quite often they are on a different wavelength from the people they're trying to minister to, and they're not sensitive to the distance between the things that they are talking about and the way they are expressing them from the ways that people see those same sorts of phenomena from the position of the pew. So I think, even in in so-called hard content courses that there are some very important things that can be done with field learning, applied, interaction, almost ethnographic contact with people around the ideas and the material, and I think that's very useful.

Okay, let's go on here then with another. Eddy? Can I pin this on you? There you go.

*In our group, we were also dealing with the issue of social interaction and the lack of that in the learning process in distance learning. And as we shared around the group, it turns out that at least three of the institutions represented have similar programs that have the same weakness. As Ted suggested, canned programs in each of these cases. We have audio materials that are recorded largely in a classroom setting, study guides, printed materials, handouts that are sent out as packages. Students work on those and send back materials to the to the institution. A person could get through without much social interaction along the way. It was pointed out that if we're thinking about leadership development, leaders have followers. Leaders always emerge in a context and the context is seldom the school. They emerge as leaders in the context where they're leading so we need to involve the people where they're learning so that they will become leaders in that in that context.*

*Two or three suggestions came. One is if we take—without changing the curriculum significantly—and we did talk about that and a suggestion or two will come on that; but one would be to suggest to the learners that they select someone, in this case in the church, to study with them and that the institution provide an extra set of materials so that there would be one person maybe taking it for credit; the other person would be taking it as a as an adjunct, not taking for credit at all. But if the preacher is taking the course for credit, the church probably is going to be helping to support that person in the tuition and the costs. So another part of the support would be to provide a person—maybe one of the elders, or a deacon, or someone in the church—preferably in that community, to look at the materials and then to ask two questions regularly: What can we learn from the text that's being studied; that is, the course that*

*applies in this church? The other question is from our context, what do we need to learn from this course that would help us? And to continually run back and forth with those two questions.*

*Another suggestion that was actually mentioned just a minute ago is to work with the student to select, as it were, a mentor. You probably don't want to think of that in terms of the academic mentoring that would be in our institutions, but a person who would be maybe a field education supervisor. Well, we're not looking at the supervising as we would in some institutions with field education, but one to whom that person would be accountable regularly; would hold that person accountable and that mentor, that field education supervisor, would then have some orientation or materials that would come from the institution and perhaps even some pay. We're just starting this in a program where I am and it was discussed around the table, as well. Another issue that came up in the discussion was looking at the courses and the objectives of the courses—the objectives that we tend to have are highly content oriented and if we're looking at the development of leaders let's put those objectives there. Looking at a multigenerational impact that is: I influence you to influence him to influence him. That requires being part of a community. So let's write the objectives with that kind of idea in mind. Then the learning experiences and the design of the course can be shifted around that way.*

*A couple of other ideas. One is that perhaps we can do with less information and more reflection, and that the overall impact would be greater with more reflection even if we have less content in the course. Our objectives might be better served that way. Reflection seldom happens by oneself. It's only with someone else.*

Thanks, Eddy, a lot of good ideas there. I can't help but propagandize part of that from my own experience. I don't think there's anything that is more apt to produce greater motivation and greater likelihood for success in, for example, a correspondence course or a distance course taken ordinarily as a one-person experience, is if you can create a learning partner relationship so that there are actually two people out there that are dealing with each other about this content in one form or another.

Now here we come back to well, how do you do that? Some of us teach that way anyway. You may have relatively few people in your institution, but let me tell you, in my whole career I've taught that way more often than not. So in classrooms and in fieldwork, my students were working two-by-two and it's clear who their learning partner is. I organize seminars that way. I believe in that. I think that gets better learning. And I think it's about time that we raised the question of what is this fetish for solo behavior? What is this fetish for individual, essentially, virtually isolated kind of assumptions about learning? You say, well, I've only got one person here and one person there and one person here. Look, that person has a whole network of people that he or she is relating to. Where are those partners? Where's our other B person? *We'll defer.* Will you defer for a moment? Let's catch one of the C's alright? One of the C's right here? Thanks, John. Go for it.

*Okay. In our group, we had two institutional heads so this was a very germane and interesting topic for them. How do you relate and correlate your institutional resources with the community institutional resources? And we recognized very quickly that the traditional academic institution—I don't think you have to build walls. We didn't think it had to build walls. They were there. It seems that the traditional institution doesn't think too much about the local resources, but is currently beginning to. The traditional idea was we teach them so they can go out there and be successes, and then whatever else they need to learn they'll pick up along the way. And it seems that these walls were built up probably most likely because of a limited and very inadequate view of the education process and of the purpose of education; that education is something that goes on all the time and we need more and more of it.*

*Industry is recognizing this, as we mentioned in our group, by demanding that people get so many CEUs every year. So they're recognizing in industry and in the job field that we need to continually be learning. And it seemed to us that the institution also has a role to play in this so that we kind of looked at two caps that an educational institution ought to wear. The one cap was the traditional on-campus cap where the primary resources are library and research facilities, faculty. I put down here formative socialization, students coming in and learning how to be mature, individuals working with other people, and conceptual learning/practical application where probably the conceptual learning is much heavier and the practical application much lighter. When an institution gets into adult education, of course, that ratio changes so that your practical application becomes much heavier.*

*The second cap that we looked at as being very important to the educational institution is what we've called distance education. What kind of resources do we bring to that? Are they the same resources? And we thought, no, they really aren't. That the resources we bring in distance education are credibility—credibility of our accredited institutions. Coordination—the idea of looking for primarily teacher/instructor people outside of the community. Because in distance education the practical application is by far the most sought after, and so you're looking for instructors who are more closely related to the practical topic, whatever it is that we're teaching. So coordination in the sense of ferretting these out, organizing these instructional bodies; and then consultation and guidance on the whole instructional process because those of us in the institution ought to be expert in that area and we've already, I think, learned we need to work at that. And the most important thing here is really the practical application. Our adult education people are coming to learn something they can apply. And we find in programs that we're conducting with adults that they're actually working in those areas so that what they are learning and applying they're going to retain a lot more. So that in the traditional on-campus you have direct instruction. But in distance education in the educational institution it's far more support-oriented. The institution is supportive and far less the direct teacher.*

One of the things that is characteristic of the ordinary formal higher education approach is that we start with theory and move toward practice. We're going to have to become more sensitive to the reverse process in distance and field learning—moving from the practical toward the theory that lies behind it. Actually, there's no good argument you could make for one way versus the other on that. It's just that we are more habituated to the theory toward practice. Effective learning can be done either way, but if we're going to really relate to adult learning, we're going to need to do more of the second.

Alright. The other C and then we have B.

*In our group, we were focused much more on the transcultural demands. In our group we had represented both seminary-level education and what might be considered lay-level education in countries around the world, rather than focusing on traditional American culture kind of problems. We identified that the problems in all of those seem to be related to item number one listed on our sheet and that is understanding the contexts in which the people are to receive the instruction—how they are operating. One of our conclusions was we should pay attention to where those folks are and not assume the American culture model. And that a part of our problem in getting across that is to set aside our traditional American education model and understand the context that's there. We looked at that from the perspective of radio instruction; actually having field sites where we have buildings in various cultures. And then particularly in South America where the problem seems to be that the need being expressed by the people doesn't fit the curriculum. We have a good curriculum and we're taking it to them, but they are saying, wait a minute, this is what we need.*

*And, unfortunately, we didn't get to a lot of solutions in identifying some of these problems. I think one of the most innovative things that was said was a program where the people on the field are actually doing the evaluation; that what we're bringing is simply the content in a lecture form; then all of the application of that is dealt with by the nationals and they determine how to apply what has been said in the lecture to their particular situation. The fear, of*

*course, is what in the world happens to me as a teacher and they may not be doing the applications the way I thought they ought to do them?*

Thanks, so much. With your indulgence we'll catch one last report and then we will actually round things off.

*We spent most of our time discussing a number of issues that were related to the groups that were there, and let me just try to highlight those for you. Basically, what we are trying to discover is, how can you create a credible program that does utilize the resources that you have in the community whether those are cultural resources, educational, pastoral, ministry resources, and try to bring them together and use them in order to achieve objectives for your program?"*

*Actually what we came up were a number of questions I think that emerged. One is: can one person understand the heart and the diversity of the number of contexts that are out there when you're working with multicultural groups and others? Is it possible to do that; or are you, by nature, going to have to rely on the community at large? And our basic agreement, at that point, was yes you are going to have to do both. You'll have to have liaison people who can stand with a foot in each world, but you are also going to have to rely upon those experts in the community.*

Thank you, Mike. Appreciate the way you've all pitched in and shared and been a very constructive discussion group.

Let me make a couple of suggestions about ACCESS. ACCESS, as an organization, is a very, very promising stimulus for a constructive, creative approach to many of the problems we're talking about today; that you emphasize case study material, cases of movement out into frontiers, and discovery of ways to do some of these things.

I think the list we've dealt with this morning is a pretty responsible list. And I would love to see in your publication series some case studies dealing with certain examples of these, where institutions have found some ways to get through the barriers and to become creative. That you seize upon the association as an interface between the institutions and the accrediting associations. The very fact that you are meeting here jointly with AABC I think is a very good omen. If you are having trouble with AABC over this, that, or the other as an individual institution; and if you're not all by yourself doing so—because all-by-yourself cases usually have something else going—but if there is something that is systematic about resistance of AABC and in terms of its policy, procedure, commissions, guidelines, and so forth, that is, in fact, hindering the development of good distance learning, why don't you put together some kind of a small group to take a hard look at your own cases and send that small group to meet with persons within the accrediting association and make that a liaison function between your organization and the accrediting association?

In the case of AABC, there's nobody in AABC who wouldn't be essentially sympathetic to your cause because you're part of the family. But I think you will find, much to your surprise, likely, that that same technique will work, even with other accreditation associations that are not beholden in the same way to the same Christian values. So some of you who are in North Central, some of you who are in Western States, whatever, may find that the same technique works if you have a professional association that is working with a group of reputable institutions to try to achieve some kind of movement in such a direction as effective distance learning. Seize upon the association as a

vehicle for communication with the accrediting association. It works far better than having individual institutions simply barking at the gates. So I would suggest those two things.

And I would also thank you for your concern about these problems, and I will trust and pray that you will continue to persevere. I think what we're dealing with in effective distance learning is going to require a level of imagination that is not ordinary within the way we do educational planning and design. Hopefully, there can be something of a refreshing new era.

Let me suggest to you sometime that you take a good concordance or a computer-based Bible program and ask for \*new related words—anything that has new or newness in its text. You will find that the Scripture is loaded with it and almost half of those texts tell of the rejoicing that God has over things that are new. We sometimes are conservative in such ways that I think we probably embarrass God.

God bless you, and have a good conference.