

ACCREDITATION UPDATE

ATESL

2012



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

Overview

- Task Team Formation
- Researcher Hired
- Accreditation Review
 - Research and Review
- Key Discussion Points
- Possible solutions/Feedback
- Next Steps

Accreditation Review

1. ATESL Accreditation
 - History
 - Rationale
 - Process
2. Issues from Accreditation Committee Members
3. Membership Survey Comments
4. Survey of TESL Accreditation across Canada
5. Comparison –ATESL, TESL Saskatchewan, TESL Ontario and TESL Canada
6. ESL Program Managers' Input
7. Non-ESL Associations
8. Best Practices
9. Languages Canada

ATESL Accreditation - History

- 1988 Board appointed a member to research the feasibility of developing an accreditation process
- Members polled – clear majority in favor of accreditation
- Employers polled – all agreed that specialized training was necessary to teach ESL; majority favored accreditation
- Extensive communication and collaboration with members before approved
- 1991 – first applications processed

ATESL Accreditation - Rationale

- Strengthen organization by raising professional image (funders, employers, learners ...)
- Assure quality instruction
- Provide industry with a standard
- Improve credibility
- Provide some direction for professional development

In addition we would be more effective advocates/lobbyists for change

Process

Goal

- to have one final minimum standard
- to include all current members (two additional options developed which would be eventually phased out)
- to have no levels or tiers designated (to avoid elitism within the community)
- To provide all members with an opportunity to provide input and to vote on final standard

Process (continued)

- Option C – available for one year (1991-92) – to accredit all applicants with ESL teaching experience only (1220 hours)
- Option B – available for five years (1996) – to accredit all applicants with a degree in any field plus ESL teaching experience (520 hours)
- Latter postponed by one year as a result of a vote at the AGM

Surveyed 5 recent committee members:

- Under Option D – difficult to assess foreign qualifications
- Often subjective based on what information was received
- IQAS only assesses degrees for equivalency, not course content
- PLAR –better alternative but cost is a factor

2010 Survey - Misconceptions Arising

- Having TESL Canada means one can teach in all provinces. (In fact, Ontario requires higher than the minimum for TESL Canada)
- One would have to buy two memberships if we switched to TESL Canada accreditation (In fact, membership in ATESL means automatic membership in TESL Canada)
- ATESL may fold if we don't offer accreditation. (In fact, ATESL existed long before accreditation and offers many other benefits to members, such as conferences, networking, job finding, etc.)
- Option D is the only means of getting accredited with experience only. (In fact, there is no option for those with experience only. Those members were grandfathered in over 20 years ago.)

TESL Accreditation Nationally

- Surveyed TESL Canada and other provincial associations
- Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario only three with a separate accreditation scheme
- Developed table comparing them with TESL Canada in a number of areas

EMPLOYERS

- Post- secondary institutions (8 responses)
- Non-profit and other private (5 responses)
- Private schools accredited under Languages Canada (3 responses)

Post secondary all **preferred** a masters or graduate diploma. Will hire less (e.g. CELTA) for certain positions

Private and non-profit all want degree plus some type of TESL certification

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

The Best Practise Statements pertaining to instructional staff follow:

20. The program hires qualified instructional staff with training in the theory and methodology of teaching and learning ESL.

21. The program hires instructional staff with the skills, abilities, and dispositions necessary for effective instruction.

22. The program hires instructional and/or other professional staff with varied levels of experience and areas of expertise.

Recommended Best Practice Guidelines

Qualifications for teaching in the program include formal training in TESL. Formal training includes any of the following:

TESL Canada Professional Certificate or equivalent, minimum of a Standard One Certificate.

Bachelor's degree in TESL.

After-degree Diploma in TESL.

Master's degree in TESL. Master's degree in a related subject (linguistics, adult education) with a specialization in TESL.

Summary of key issues being discussed and answered to inform the recommendation

- Potential role of IQAS -only assesses degrees for equivalency, not course content
- Need for ELP requirement for foreign trained teachers
- PLAR –cost is a factor; value of creating our own or accepting TESL
- Articulation of the benefits of ATESL and/vs TESL accreditation

Key Issues (continued)

- TESL training/education –need to develop a list of approved programs/course work based on approved criteria
- How to have fair, transparent and reliable processes for all potential applicants
- Need to meet Languages Canada requirement for TESL Canada accreditation or equivalent; this was cited as important for Institutions to meet all external approvals

Key Issues (continued)

- Will grandfathering cause issues in future years; how do we ensure standards if we repeat this process?
- The need for practicum and/or performance reviews and/or professional references
- Establish reason for Interim standing and validate rationale for such
- Is loss of revenue from accreditation an issue?
- Professional development credits/course recommendations if gaps in competencies and knowledge

Option #1

Eliminate any new ATESL accreditation and refer members to TESL Canada accreditation

Advantages:

- We no longer deal with any applications, Accreditation committee is dissolved
- TESL Canada has a PLAR process to deal with Foreign Trained Applicants
- This will enable us to eliminate all the perceived challenges with a provincial accreditation and adopt a national system.

Option #1 Cont'd

Disadvantages:

- Lowering the standard and not “promoting the highest standard for ESL”
- No say in accreditation at the national level. Decisions regarding training and education will be made by TESL Canada, in collaboration with some much bigger players than ATESL, such as BC TEAL and TESL ON.
- Also ATESL may lose some of its credibility with funders as it will move from being described as an accrediting body (like the ATA) to simply a professional development body.
- More expensive accreditation fee = \$90; PLAR \$290 (ATESL \$50)
- Makes ATESL a professional organization only, may discourage membership
- How will our current members feel about what they have paid for already with an ATESL Accreditation?



Option #2

Maintain the status quo for all applicants, and refer only internationally trained applicants to a PLAR Expert well versed with ATESL standards.

Advantages:

- Maintains ATESL standard
- Simple to administer; transparent to applicants
- Fairness to all applicants

Disadvantages:

- Cost to IEP
- ATESL to create PLAR process and contract a professional PLAR consultant
- ATESL standard maintains status quo

Option #3

Add value to ATESL accreditation. Develop a new descriptive set of standards/competencies for ATESL Accreditation. Then develop a rigorous PLAR process for teachers with experience and or foreign credentials. We could also possibly add post accreditation training as an additional another level or an area of specialization.

Advantages:

- Adding value to ensure we are demonstrating high professional standards; a
 - Professional supervised practicum and professional review
 - Continuation of professional development credits
- Add value to ATESL accreditation with an Alberta context that gives credibility to employers and funders
- Have a rigorous process for IEP

Option #3

Disadvantages:

- This option is time consuming and could not be delivered for at least a year.
- Cost of developing the PLAR process
- Members would have to re-qualify

Next Steps

- Gather feedback from membership
- Solicit comments through the website (presentation will be posted)
- Complete the discussions and review with the task force committee
- Provide recommendation(s) to the Board
- Ask the Board to make a motion designating next steps

Task Force Team Members

Our appreciation and thanks to the following individuals:

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