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Standards for a quality
of life

ACE 2015 National
Conference: Introducing
your Keynotes

VET reform 2015: New
standards for regulators

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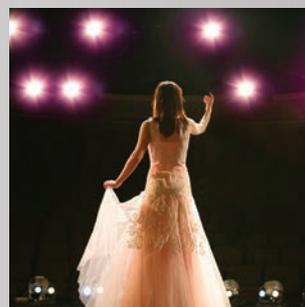
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Standards or standardisation?

When I speak with colleagues in countries such as England and the US about the use of professional standards for teaching, the reaction is usually negative. Standards are frequently externally devised and imposed and are about minimum performance levels, often with the threat of sanctions for non-compliance. Additionally, these standards are often what Ken Leithwood has described as 'first generation', in that they consist of 'shopping lists' of teachers' duties. First generation standards tend to engender a compliance mentality, in that the tendency is to 'tick off' items when various aspects have been performed to some minimal level; what organisational theorists would label as 'satisficing' behaviour. The irony with such lists of duties that attempt to capture the total work of a teacher, is that it is easy for a teacher to look at such a list and see things that are missing. This tends to make such standards seemingly less relevant to teachers from different contexts.

'Second generation' standards on the other hand are less prescriptive and more aspirational in nature. Rather than engendering a compliance mentality, these are more future and improvement focussed, and are more about developing capabilities than judging competencies. In other words, second generation standards are more about developing and improving, than judging and proving.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachersⁱ (APST) and the Australian Professional Standard for Principalsⁱⁱ (APSP) are examples of second

generation standards, used not only to make judgements about performance, but to inform self-reflection on capabilities, mentoring and coaching, selection, appraisal and professional development. In contrast to experiences elsewhere, there has been a high degree of practitioner input and development to the standards, with a national validation project in the case of the APST and ten projects 'road testing' the standards in the case of the APSPⁱⁱⁱ.

The evaluation of the implementation of the APST is now being undertaken by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) and ACE through a project being conducted for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). The Principals Australia Institute (PAI) is moving towards certifying principals against the APSP^{iv}. There are also various pilot projects involving certification of teachers against the Highly Accomplished and Lead levels of the APST, whilst nationally consistent processes for the Proficient level of the APST and the accreditation of teacher education programs are in place^v.

It is clear that there has been a positive reception across Australia to the introduction of professional standards for teachers and principals, although one of the challenges will be to achieve closer articulation between the various levels of standards with salary and career structures. Once this occurs then we will have a career structure fit for a profession rather than the present largely industrially-based inconsistent system^{vi}.

This edition of *Professional educator* comprises a comprehensive examination

of the nature and use of professional standards, not just for schooling, but also in the Early Childhood and VET areas as well as areas such as Arts Education.

Australia now possesses a suite of professional standards for educators of world standard, but a crucial aspect is how these will be utilised and the support provided for such use. These articles in this special edition provide essential background to understanding and addressing these challenges. Additionally, the APST play an integral role in the substance and follow up to the recent Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) review^{vii}, further underlining their importance and potential to provide a framework and mechanism to improve teaching and learning in Australian education.

Professor Stephen Dinham OAM, FACE ACE National President

References:

ⁱ <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers/standards/list>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standard-for-principals>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.aitsl.edu.au/verve/resources/PilotStudy_NPSPrincipals.pdf

^{iv} <http://certification.pai.edu.au/>

^v http://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/initial-teacher-education-resources/accreditation_of_initial_teacher_education_file.pdf

^{vi} <http://www.bca.com.au/Content/101446.aspx>

^{vii} <http://www.studentsfirst.gov.au/teacher-education-ministerial-advisory-group>

Establishing a professional certification authority

LAWRENCE INGVARSON, FACE



The British Prime Minister David Cameron recently announced that his government would be supporting a proposal from the teaching profession to establish its own, teacher-led College of Teaching, fully independent of government.

Trust is at the heart of our approach to teaching. This is about giving the profession

the autonomy and responsibility that it has long needed – because, quite simply, we see teachers as key allies in this critical drive to make Britain's education system world class. Mr Cameron (www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storyCode=11006725).

What led the Prime Minister to make such an announcement, and in tones rarely heard about teaching in Australia?

Early in 2014, a 'Blueprint' for an independent professional body, a 'Royal College of Teaching', was launched with professional certification as its core, unique function (www.princes-ti.org.uk/CollegeofTeaching/February2014Blueprint/); a voluntary system providing recognition to teachers who have attained high standards of practice.

The initiative came from a cross-section of the education community, including subject associations and teacher unions, and was facilitated by The Prince's Teaching Institute, an independent educational charity established by the Prince of Wales. The Blueprint rapidly gained support across the profession during 2014.

Later in 2014, the Secretary of State for Education and the Minister of State for Schools launched a consultation paper, *A World Class Teaching Profession*, which proposed support for the creation of a chartered College of Teaching (www.gov.uk/government/consultations/developing-the-teaching-profession-to-a-world-class-standard).

Teaching should rightly enjoy an equally high status as professions such as medicine or law. But in order to gain that standing, teaching needs strong professional leadership to champion the highest standards of practice and the continuous development and improvement of its members. That is why we are proposing to support the creation of a new, independent body which can support the teaching profession as a whole and act as an advocate for the highest professional standards. The value of a new 'College of Teaching' is almost unanimously agreed on by experts – and although we are very clear that such a body needs to be independent of government and led by the professions if it is to be truly successful – we are committed to offering the support that is needed to make its establishment a reality.

In the same paper, the Secretary of State committed to providing start-up, hands off, funding to support and enable the establishment of the College of Teaching, 'which must be led by teachers', by 2016.

The Blueprint provided the government with clear evidence of leadership at the level of the profession to which the Prime Minister and the Education Secretary for England were able to respond with a promise to entrust teachers with the core responsibilities of a profession.

Although we are very clear that such a body needs to be independent of government and led by the professions if it is to be truly

successful – we are committed to offering the support that is needed to make its establishment a reality.

In response, the interim College of Teaching Board has proposed a five-year 'incubator' period to the end of 2019, during which time it would receive government seed funding of 11.9 million pounds and by which time it would be self-funding. The College has also received funding from philanthropic bodies.

What about Australia?

In one sense, Australia has been well ahead of England with respect to the idea of professional certification. In 2003, 15 teacher associations put together a National Statement from the Teaching Profession on *Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism*. It recommended that:

A nationally coordinated, rigorous and consistent system should be established to provide recognition to teachers who demonstrate advanced standards . . . The enterprise bargaining process between employers and unions will be an important mechanism for providing recognition for professional certification. All employing authorities should be encouraged to provide recognition and support for professional certification as the process comes to demonstrate its credibility and its effects on professional learning. (p. 4)

The Statement was the culmination of three years work coordinated by Australian College of Educators (ACE). During the 2000s, 16 professional associations developed certification standards for their specialist field (most with Australian Government funding). All except one wanted their standards to be used in a national certification system.

Ten years later, in 2013, ACE initiated a Roundtable to revisit the 2003 Statement. More than half the original organisations were able to attend and were strongly of the view that the 2003 statement continued to be relevant – and that Australia had not established a professional certification system consistent with that envisaged in 2003.

Implications for Australia

The current policy framework for assuring the quality of Australia's future teachers is clearly not working. If Australia is to maintain and enhance the quality of educational opportunities for its students, we will need more effective policies for attracting our best high school and university graduates, retaining them in teaching and rewarding their professional development.

We will need policies that strengthen teaching as a profession, and trust it with the responsibilities of a profession.

Teaching needs its own national professional body, independent of government and other employing authorities, but working alongside and complementing their role. That body also needs to be independent of unions and not engage in industrial matters such as pay and conditions.

It needs to do what governments, government agencies and unions cannot do. It needs to develop a rigorous system for providing recognition and certification to teachers who attain high standards of practice. This is the means by which professions give direction to professional learning and ensure widespread adoption of successful teaching practices.

A rigorous and independent certification system would enable governments and other employing authorities to link higher salaries to teaching excellence and provide career prospects that will attract a greater proportion of our ablest graduates into teaching.

Unlike most professions, teaching has yet to establish its own national system for providing teachers with a widely recognised and respected certification. While there are many highly-accomplished teachers, teaching does not have a profession-wide agency for confirming their level of expertise.

Jurisdiction is key

Jurisdiction over certification is the hallmark of a profession. So far, State and Territory Ministers of Education have denied teachers such jurisdiction. For teaching to claim jurisdiction



over certification it must be able to demonstrate that teaching requires expertise, that it can define what constitutes that expertise and that it can distinguish those who have attained that expertise from those who, as yet, have not.

Professions are usually entrusted to manage their own advanced certification systems. Jurisdiction over advanced certification for most established professions has usually taken the form of a royal 'charter' giving a profession authority to provide that service.

Historically, most established professions in Australia, such as the Royal College of Surgeons and Engineers Australia, inherited their charter from a time when they were linked to parent British associations. The charter for nearly 20 professional associations now rests with Australia's Governor-General. It is time to add teaching to their number.

The recent announcement by the British Prime Minister shows the idea is not as far-fetched as it might seem. However, Australian educators need to provide similarly convincing evidence of professional leadership. This is, in essence, the bargain that all professions make with society. The profession guarantees the competence of members in exchange for professional autonomy over standards of practice and certification.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

In 2010, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was created with responsibility for establishing a nationally consistent system for the certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers. AITSL reports to the Federal Minister of Education, State and Territory Ministers of Education, and representatives of other employing authorities are also on its Board.

While AITSL was not established as an independent professional body, it was given the role of establishing a national standards framework, now widely accepted, which includes standards at the

Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher levels. It was also asked to develop guidelines for assessing applicants for certification at those advanced levels.

Unlike England, however, 'jurisdiction', over assessment and certification operations were not granted to the profession. The AITSL Board deemed that authority to rest with State and Territory Ministers and other employing authorities, although there was no legal basis to support this claim (except in NSW). At last count, AITSL has recognised 25 different certification authorities in NSW, SA, WA, the NT and the ACT (Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania are not participating). Each authority is controlled by a government or employer agency. Each operates its own interpretation of the AITSL assessment guidelines.

How rigorous is the current assessment and certification process?

A certification system must meet high standards of rigour if it is to gain the confidence of the profession and the public. It needs to be informed by expertise in performance assessment and meet high standards of educational measurement. Serious attention must be given to meeting these standards before proceeding further.

As yet, no research has been conducted on the validity or reliability of the current AITSL guidelines for assessing teacher performance. It needs to be clear that the assessment methods are providing valid evidence of highly accomplished teaching and that they distinguish teachers who are more successful from those who are not. They must show that assessors can apply the standards consistently and with minimum bias. We are a long way from establishing a rigorous system for assessing teachers at the Highly Accomplished and Lead levels.

So far, few teachers have completed the present assessment process as set out in the AITSL guidelines. The current process for gathering evidence is cumbersome and expensive. The guidelines need

greater clarity and a task-based structure if teachers are to interpret them in similar ways and if assessors are to reach necessary levels of consistency. Much more work is needed before a transparent and replicable process of developing benchmarks, setting standards and training assessors can be established.

The present process for assessing candidates for certification will face major difficulties in going to scale if thousands, rather than a handful, of teachers apply each year. This is likely to happen in NSW, where salaries for Highly Accomplished Teachers will rise by \$8000 in 2016.

Experience elsewhere, for example the Scottish Chartered Teacher scheme, indicates it would be unwise to begin providing financial recognition for certification before the assessment process had proved its rigour and credibility. Nothing will kill a certification system more quickly than growing doubts about its ability to distinguish teachers who can meet high performance standards from those, who, as yet have not. We need research that recognises the challenges involved in developing administratively feasible and valid standards-based methods for assessing teacher performance.

Strengthening the profession

The present situation invites two propositions, each suggesting how Australia might move toward a certification system owned and operated by the profession and, thereby, providing enhanced opportunities for leadership at the level of the profession.

- Given AITSL has recognised many certifying authorities in several states and territories, it seems reasonable to recognise one provided by professional associations, similar to that being developed by the College of Teaching in England, and based on a similarly sound 'Blueprint'. A professional certifying authority could provide a pathway to certification available to all teachers and recognised nationwide.

- Given that it is unlikely that we have come up with the one best approach to assessment as yet, it would seem sensible to charge this professional certifying authority with responsibility for developing and demonstrating psychometrically sound methods for assessing teaching at the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher levels.

While AITSL is not a professional body, it still has an important 'enabling' role it could play in facilitating the development of an independent professional certification authority. This is one of the most effective ways in which I think AITSL, as a body that brings Federal, State and Territory Ministers together with other employing authorities, can best promote the quality of teachers and teaching in Australia.

A recurring theme in a recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report is that successful educational reform is inseparable from strengthening teaching as a profession:

Successful education systems are those that promote leadership at all levels, encouraging teachers and principals, regardless of the formal positions they occupy, to lead innovation in the classroom, the school and the system as a whole. (Schleicher, A. (2015), Schools for 21st-Century Learners: Strong Leaders, Confident Teachers, Innovative Approaches, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing)

Building an independent and respected professional certification system is a necessary condition for strengthening teaching as a profession.

Under what conditions is Australia most likely to build a rigorous certification system that is recognised nationwide as a valid basis for lifting salaries to levels that attract a much higher proportion of our ablest graduates from high school and university? It is certainly unlikely to happen with 25 different certifying authorities, a situation that other professions find hard to believe. And a clear sign that our governments do not believe teaching is up to the task.



A first step might be for AITSL to encourage the profession to develop a proposal for a national certifying authority, to complement the current certifying authorities, and to provide an avenue for teachers in states that do not have an AITSL recognised certifying authority to apply for certification.

However, teachers and their associations should not necessarily wait to be granted this responsibility—they can simply claim it and get on with building their capacity to do it, as professional associations have done in England. This is what Australia's school principals and their associations are doing. Brought together by the Principals Australia Institute (PAI), they have been developing a professional certification system for accomplished principals over the past two years. On present trends, it will be ready to accept its first candidates in 2016.

An Australian College of Teaching

Like England, it is time for the profession to show governments and other employing authorities, as well as the public, that it is willing and able to establish its own certification system. Professions have a responsibility to provide governments with a clear direction and a viable program for promoting quality practice. It is time to demonstrate that the profession is willing and able to assume such a responsibility and play its part in ensuring that Australia has strong teaching profession.

The current Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) provide a framework within which a College of Teaching could provide professional certification. Establishing a successful certification system will also require a stable policy environment. As the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Education in the UK recognised, independence is essential for stability. However, the first essential will be for the profession to build a coalition across the profession around the concept of an independent profession-run certifying authority and to present that concept in a form that governments and the public welcome and find irresistible.

In my view the proposed College of Teaching in England would be:

- Independent
- Voluntary
- Run by teachers for the ultimate benefit of learners
- Subject to a governance model that ensures no single interest group can dominate.

These would seem to be features that should also be central to an Australian College of Teaching. As proposed, the primary and unique function of an Australian College of Teaching would be to provide a highly-respected professional certification system:

- It would not be a regulatory body
- Its certification would not be compulsory
- It would not have a disciplinary role
- It would not be a commercial organisation—any surplus should be invested towards teachers' continued professional development.

Governance

It seems unlikely that any existing body would gain the necessary support of a majority of teacher organisations or associations to form a professional certifying authority alone. Nor could any existing body provide the independence essential to providing a rigorous assessment and certification system.

To ensure the integrity of a professional certification system, a new body would need to be created. Its governing board would need to be administratively independent of any other professional organisation. Its sole responsibility would be to construct a rigorous certification system and its members would be composed primarily of those who are already highly accomplished practitioners. Its value to Australian education—and its survival—would depend on the rigour of its certification system and the respect that system gained across the education system. While its independence is essential, a College of Teaching would need to be in

constant dialogue with its constituents and responsive to their suggestions and concerns.

How would an independent professional certification system play a key role in the education system?

If a standards-based professional learning and certification system was working well:

- Teachers would have a strong sense of ownership for the system.
- Teachers would regard the standards as challenging and worth pursuing as a guide to their professional learning over the long-term.
- It would lead most teachers to seek professional learning experiences that helped them reach accomplished teaching standards and thereby improve learning outcomes for their students.
- It would thereby support widespread use of successful teaching practices
- Teachers would take greater responsibility for establishing their own professional learning system, within and across schools, and in collaboration with universities, to support teachers preparing for certification.
- Teachers would regard the assessment methods as valid, reliable and fair.
- Employing authorities would regard certification as a reliable basis for recognising accomplished teachers and providing salaries and career opportunities that retained the best teachers close to the classroom.
- It would improve the attractiveness of teaching as a career and thereby enable teaching to compete more effectively with other professions for achieving high school and university graduates.
- It would provide a sound basis on which to link teacher salaries to quality of practice, without the negative effects of bonus pay or merit pay schemes.

Next steps:

What would be involved if the teaching profession in Australia decided to work toward establishing its own independent professional certification system with these characteristics? I suggest that part of what would be involved is developing a Blueprint for an Australian College of Teaching, similar to that developed by educators in England. This would require:

- Building a coalition among professional associations, unions, leading educationalists, Deans of Education, and other stakeholders in support of the concept of an independent College of Teaching.
- Establishing a working group to develop a draft Blueprint for a College of Teaching. This Blueprint would set out:
 - A vision for the College of Teaching
 - A rationale for the College's role in professional learning and certification
 - An implementation plan for the establishment of the College as a legal entity, including an interim governance structure with a financial plan
 - Proposals for funding and timescale.
- Extensive consultation on the Blueprint with the profession, professional associations, teacher unions, governments and other employers.
- Redrafting and revision of the Blueprint
- Building a wider circle of awareness and support from leading Australians and 'Champions of the Profession' for a national professional body and the Draft Blueprint.
- Further consultation and signing off of the Blueprint by professional associations and other stakeholders.
- Gaining employer recognition for the certification.
- Applying to be recognised as Certifying Authority by AISTL or applying for a charter from the Governor-General.

I believe this is a venture that matches the aspirations of teachers to build a profession of teaching.

Lawrence Ingvanson, FACE is a Principal Research Fellow at the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER).



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JILL ABELL, MACE

Supporting a nationally consistent certification system

A case study of teacher librarian practice provides clear evidence of the potential roles of national professional associations in establishing nationally consistent standards and certifications. Reviewing the work of the two peak national associations for the school library sector, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) group named ALIA Schools and the Australian School Library Association (ASLA), will reflect on the three questions analysed in the second interim report produced by Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). Those three questions are:

- What drives successful implementation of the standards?
- How do educators (pre-service teachers, teacher educators, teachers and school leaders) view the impact of implementing the standards?
- What support is needed for effective implementation?

(*InSights*, AITSL, 2014, p6)

Background

ALIA and ASLA first published standards in 2005, outlining the professional knowledge, practice and commitment expected of teacher librarians working at a level of excellence. As a joint statement, the major aim of the *Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians* (ALIA/ASLA, 2005) was to achieve national consensus on what constituted excellent teacher librarian

practice, to inform the profession and enhance student learning outcomes. Qualified teacher librarians hold recognised dual qualifications in both teaching and librarianship. Beyond teaching expertise, the standards outlined the professional knowledge, practice and commitment expected of teacher librarians working at a level of excellence. They were informed by the standards movement in other national professional associations for educators. Such advice was represented through the consulting arm of the Associations Forum in its recommendations to national professional associations on not-for-profit associations setting professional standards and where there is registration, going beyond registration standards (Associations Forum, 2015).

Notably, they were also closely allied to the strong traditions, the mainstream standards and the newly-certified practitioner (CP status) in the library and information sector, particularly the ALIA core knowledge, skills and attributes of the *ALIA core values statements* [www.alia.org.au/about-alia/policies-standards-and-guidelines/alia-core-values-statement]. ALIA remains an important resource for all 5500 members, not just the teacher librarians who believe in a strong network of library and information services for all Australians. Postgraduate qualified teacher librarians meet eligibility standards for associate membership and can commence their certified professional membership (CP status) of the general ALIA PD Scheme.

Teacher librarians' involvement in the work on the standards continued through a consultation and validation process until the development of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) and the work of AITSL became a unifying process. Chaired by Sandra Ryan, a working party of the ALIA Schools Committee formed in May 2013 and a new process began to develop the document *Teacher Librarian Practice for the Australian Professional Standards* (ALIA, 2014) to assist principals, teacher librarians and school communities. The document provides exemplars of practice for teacher librarians, details about teacher librarian practice to those involved with performance appraisal and a set of standards for principals focusing on the role of the teacher librarian within the school. The document is in two parts—primary and secondary—and within each part there are three sections representing the APST career stages of Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers. For each stage there are three further parts: identifying the stage of the standard, the practice of that standard and then possible evidence that would be needed to be collected. The document is on the ALIA Schools website at [www.alia.org.au/groups/alia-schools].

What drives implementation of the standards?

In the findings of AITSL's first commissioned Interim Report (AITSL, 2014), based upon the data of the first national survey, four factors



were extrapolated: knowledge, prior use, positive attitude and intention to implement. The application of these four factors as a frame of reference to review the evidence-based practice and joint activities of the two peak national professional associations, ALIA and ASLA is a worthwhile one. This application helps provide a rich description that can assist and reaffirm generalisation to other national peak professional or educational subject associations.

From 2005 onwards, as websites, online forums, and keynote presentations in national and state school library conference proceedings demonstrate, both organisations provided national consensus and leadership on implementing the *Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians* (ALIA/ASLA, 2005). Advocacy, policy advisory and project teams from both the national ASLA and ALIA boards and national councils worked together to contribute to Teaching Australia and AITSL policy steering groups and also developed practical applications of excellent teacher librarian knowledge and practice.

AITSL began to include examples of the ALIA/ASLA work on highly accomplished teacher librarian in their *Illustrations of Practice* resource website and this can be seen in the two examples: 'Information Literacy' and 'Ethical Information Use'. Films prepared by ALIA Schools to specifically help teacher librarians as they identify where their practice lies in the highly accomplished career stage cover both a primary and secondary schools. They include *Engaging students in literature*, *Information literacy*, *Ancient Rome*, *Selecting Resources* at (www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers/illustrations-of-practice/find-by-career-stage).

How do educators view the impact of implementing the standards?

Simply addressing this question, the evidence of the viewing and progressive immersion of teacher librarians' participation in collaborative discussions to share or enhance their own professional practice is in the record of postings at one online forum at (www.aliaschools.wordpress.com/).

In the 2014 online forum, putting a daily focus on each of the seven standards, narrative comments from participants demonstrate exploratory and collaborative responses.

What support is needed for effective implementation?

Strategic leadership will always play a key role in sustaining effective change. Anne Girolami, in her previous role as Director for the ASLA Board, strategically chaired an advisory team that in recent years wrote two evidence guides for teacher librarians. Anne became a key driver in the national working parties on teacher librarians' mapping of their evidences against the AITSL documentary evidence supplement, designed as a the companion document to the *Guide to Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia*. Positive attitudes and funded implementations were supported in 2013-2015 ALIA Schools and ASLA online forums dedicated to unpacking the document, *Teacher Librarian Practice for the Australian Professional Standards* (ALIA, 2014).

Change agents

Sustained initiatives used by the peak groups, ALIA Schools and ASLA:

- in supporting representative teams of teacher librarian members working together
- having a truly national focus
- by both teleconference and face-to-face meetings
- to compile resources for each career stage

has been the singular most important level of support for embarking effective implementations school wide.

The next steps will be to document, report and share nationally with school system and sector leadership how teacher librarians at their different career stages actually gather their evidence and provide it to their local school leadership for its contribution to school improvement planning.

This case study of teacher librarian practice provides clear evidence of the

powerful change agent roles of national professional associations in establishing and maintaining resources to support nationally consistent standards and certifications.

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Standards for a quality of life

LOUISE THORPE AND DAVID GILKES



We work together to help each other, because we are a team. We can do things all by ourselves, but sometimes grownups don't let us do things by ourselves...because they are not at school to see us doing them.

[Taken from a conversation between Wilhelmina, Millie and Grace, (4 years old) (Kinder 2014)].

As early childhood educators we believe strongly in play and rich inquiry based learning, as well as viewing children as competent, curious and creative individuals. We believe that children co-construct their learning through

relationships with others and their environment and we find ourselves frequently challenged by business, standardised or outdated approaches to education. We advocate for more robust discussions on the role of education and schools in Australia. What do we mean by 'education' today? What do we mean by 'school'? What does it mean to be 'successful'? Society has changed and continues to change and education needs to reflect this. Some sources say public schools were created in the industrialisation period, and over time have become increasingly about

preparing people to enter the workforce. But what does the workforce of tomorrow look like? Is the main purpose of education still to produce people that will contribute to the workforce, or is it more than that? How do we respect and give rights to children as citizens and learners from birth? How do we create a community of lifelong learners? Does a 'one size fits all' approach to education help give children skills and knowledge that can be applied to a multitude of contexts? Does the approach cater for a child's interests or passions? Why in so many sectors of society do test scores,



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answers and concepts that can be measured, seem to be given greater value than skills and aptitudes such as critical thinking and creativity? For us, the most challenging aspect of being a teacher lies in questions such as these.

And yet, the concept of standards/quality as something that must be 'achieved' has been a dominant discourse in our society; 'this leads to a world of uniformity, a standardised recipe for the quality of early childhood' (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p. 5).

In the past, and in many industrialised countries, the dominant discourse surrounding quality care and education for young children has been concerned with the notion of early childhood institutions 'as a producer of care and of standardised and predetermined child outcomes ... In particular as reproducer of knowledge, identity and culture, the broad and increasingly important tasks of these institutions as producers, is to fill up the empty vessel that young child has often been understood to be' (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p. 63). However, if we start to see schools as places of research, where children and adults co-construct knowledge and their understanding of the world together, then we will begin to take some steps in the right direction, hopefully moving away from the long-held view that schools should be reproducers or transmitters of knowledge. One of Carla Rinaldi's aspirations for our early childhood institutions is that the 'language' of Australia's various services and centres are connected, rather than fragmented. It is only through open discussion that change can occur. It is encouraging

that many educational approaches are beginning to draw on socio-constructivist theories, as frameworks for curriculums and methodologies. Embedded in such theories is an image of a competent child. This belief is at the core of the values our colleagues in Reggio Emilia live and work by. Indeed, such socio-constructivist theories are completely echoed in and supported by the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), *Belonging, Being and Becoming*.

Children actively construct their own understandings and contribute to other's learning. They recognise their agency, capacity to initiate and lead learning and their rights to participate in decisions that affect them, including their learning.

(Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p. 9).

We are fortunate in Australia that the EYLF offers a challenge to educators—to take on a 'new' vision in the context of guiding early childhood policies that questions previously held notions of education. The framework highlights that a child's learning and development is complex, dynamic and holistic. Indeed, Rinaldi uses the analogy of a bowl of spaghetti to allude to the many and varied learning styles and paths that students can take (Rinaldi, 2006). Learning is not linear and does not occur in a linear way. 'Viewing children as active participants and decision makers opens up possibilities for educators to move beyond pre-conceived expectations about what children can and do learn' (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p. 9). Education is not

about ticking boxes, following recipes or measuring against set standards or predetermined outcomes ... It is, however, about possibilities. The EYLF offers us these possibilities and the opportunity to think about standards for a 'quality of life'.

Authors, Dahlberg, Moss & Pence state that over the past 30 years, even though there has been an increasingly diverse dialogue around Early Childhood Education and early childhood institutions, there continues to be a 'dominant' language of early childhood which focuses on standardisation. They ask us to consider what standards do we really need? 'How can we best achieve desirable outcomes' (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p. 1-2)? These authors suggest that by thinking in this way we are reducing the world to a set of objective 'statements of fact'—by avoiding ethical dimensions, the notion of 'value' is transformed into the 'technical'. In doing so, such standards can inadvertently 'express a desire for a clean and orderly world, devoid of messiness and complexity' (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p. 2). But life isn't like this. Learning isn't like this. What if we viewed Early Childhood Education through the lens of a multiplicity of languages about early childhood, or as Rorty suggests 'the potential infinity of vocabularies in which the world can be described' (Rorty, 1980, p. 376)?

If, as educators and people concerned with education, we begin to encourage critical inquiry and dialogue concerning the purpose of early childhood institutions, then we may begin to see a new set of possibilities opening up before

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our eyes. We might better understand the child, their capabilities, knowledge and understandings, and alternative ways of thinking and engaging with them.

Let's look at what the educational project in Reggio Emilia, Italy, can offer us in our Australian context when thinking about these things further. After all, 'Reggio Emilia has been able to disrupt processes and normalisation, standardisation and neutralisation and make way for and celebrate diversity, difference and pluralism' (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p. 12).

In 2013 Rinaldi, former President of Reggio Children, was invited to visit South Australia as part of the State Government's 'Thinkers in Residence'

program. While she was there she worked extensively with educators across the state to reflect on the Reggio Emilia educational project and draw inspiration from this for a new vision of children and learning in South Australia and throughout the country. Some of the areas explored by Rinaldi during her residency included: opening up dialogue and debate about 'the culture of childhood and the value of the child as citizen from birth'; building a solid culture of collaboration; being open to change and new perspectives; and 'the design and provision of spaces and places for children'. In the document published after Rinaldi's residency in South Australia (*Re-imagining Childhood*, 2013) she states that early childhood centres should not

just offer care and services for families, but more importantly be 'places of and for learning for children, teachers, parents and the community' — 'learning communities' that put forward 'a new possible style of democracy' (Rinaldi, 2013, p. 13). Rinaldi argues that our beliefs (as a country, state, school and society) about children are a determining factor in defining their social and cultural identity, their rights, and the educational experiences offered to them (Rinaldi, 2013, p. 13). 'How can schools be places where you build quality standards for the quality of life for children?' (Rinaldi, 2013, p. 24). How can we shift our focus from quality outcomes to 'quality of life'?

It is our hope that State and National Governments, and all education decision makers in Australia, are brave and insightful enough to see that meaningful and change-driven discussions (particularly involving teachers and educators) need to take place; discussions around what education is for, and how we keep the flames of learning alive and glowing brightly in our children and society now and into the future.

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Photos courtesy of Louise Thorpe and Chris Jones

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VET reform 2015: New standards for regulators

LORI HOCKING



- integrity of national recognised training by regulating RTO's and VET accredited courses
- consistency in the VET regulators' implementation and interpretation of the standards applying to RTOs and VET accredited courses
- accountability and transparency of VET regulators (ASQA, 2015).

Both sets of standards are supported by other key VET policy and legislative requirements, including standards associated with training packages and VET accredited courses. There are eight standards for RTOs including specific benefits for users, learners, industry/employers, governments, and providers. These include:

Training and assessment

Standard 1: The RTO's training and assessment strategies and practices are responsive to industry and learner needs and meet the requirements of training packages and VET accredited courses.

Standard 2: The operations of the RTO are quality assured.

Standard 3: The RTO issues, maintains and accepts AQF certification documentation in accordance with the Standards and provides access to learner records.

Obligations to learners and clients

Standard 4: Accurate and accessible information about an RTO, its services and performance is available to inform prospective and current learners and clients.

Standard 5: Each learner is properly informed and protected.

Standard 6: Complaints and appeals are recorded, acknowledged and dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively.

The introduction of the new 'Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015' and the 'Standards for Vocational Education and Training (VET) Regulators 2015' are a welcome development for the contemporary VET sector within a rapidly changing training marketplace. In 2015, the development of the standards was supported by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and this endorsement was vital to their success and successful implementation across the VET sector. The authoritative body enabling this process is the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), which has a role to play 'promoting quality training so that students, employers, and industry have confidence in Australia's training sector' (ASQA, 2015).

For many RTOs and VET professional organisations, the design and implementation of the standards, while onerous, are absolutely necessary to improve the quality and status of the VET sector, including specific outcomes in relation to student training and industry expectations. There has been some commentary in the Australian media of late focussing on 'negative' aspects

of the VET sector. The standards will provide a structure to reconceptualise and professionalise the VET sector with a goal firmly entrenched on raising the status and the quality of vocational training. VET is such a necessary and vital pathway for many young Australians who are committed to learning and education (more broadly) to meet industry expectations and it is timely that the standards lead a reform process to address these issues and challenges.

It is worth noting that the purpose of the standards for RTOs is to:

- describe the requirements that an organisation must meet in order to be a RTO in Australia
- ensure that the training delivered by RTOs meets industry requirements (as stated in the training package or accredited course) and has the integrity for employment and further study
- ensure RTOs operate ethically and consider the needs of both learners and industry (ASQA, 2015).

The purpose of the standards for VET Regulators is to ensure:

RTO governance and administration

Standard 7: The RTO has effective governance and administration arrangements in place.

Standard 8: The RTO cooperates with the VET Regulator and is legally compliant at all times (ASQA, 2015).

Each of the above has a complex description and a detailed set of clauses that are vital for effective implementation and understanding. However, their purpose and intention is linked to the 'quality' agenda. As with much public policy the implementation of the standards has been problematic for many RTOs. However, there has been positive feedback within the VET sector about the high level support and advice offered by ASQA to ensure the common understanding and strategic implementation of the standards. This is credit to ASQA who have publicly consulted and sought feedback from the broader VET sector.

While the above set of standards have made it clear, in relation to future direction for many RTOs, the VET sector remains a large and complex area. The VET sector has approximately 5900 VET providers (both public and private) and about 1.8 million students each year enrol in, or complete a VET qualification (Productivity Commission, 2011).

The VET sector is vital to the Australian economy as it not only generates significant income it also helps support workforce development and increases the skill levels of Australians including VET teachers and practitioners.

VETnetwork Australia is the peak representative body for these VET practitioners and therefore it is extremely important that practitioners working in RTOs have a comprehensive understanding of the standards and their role in promoting quality and improving the overall status of VET.

The standards are one public policy reform item that Australia has designed to ensure the Australian VET system remains world class. Furthermore, there are increasing demands from a range of industry sectors, nationally and internationally, to improve the status and professionalism of Australia's VET sector to ensure it better meets actual skilled labour, training requirements. To help support the VET reform agenda, VET practitioners must also be world class and have the right skills to create best practice in quality education and training outcomes.

One of the ongoing issues for many VET practitioners is linked to the implementation of the new standards and how they individually and collectively improve the practice? The standards are very much focussed on the RTOs, rightly so, as there is a need to improve and standardise the quality of business practices from within to ensure consistency including the engagement of business and industry in training. However, there is also a need to provide better support and create capability standards for staff working in RTOs including the VET practitioner. VET practitioners play a vital role in relation to improving student outcomes and helping

to improve the quality and integrity of vocational qualifications.

The reform process in the VET sector undertaken by the Australian Government has been systematic and in many cases, has been rolled out to protect the public standing of the VET sector as a world class system – this quite rightly so, is a credible basis on which to enact change. However, there is still more work to be achieved in relation to the VET practitioner including: creating greater (better) confidence in training outcomes whilst maintaining the integrity of VET qualifications; ensuring national consistency by implementing a common set of educational capability standards for all VET practitioners (in all training jurisdictions); and providing high level support for VET practitioners including professional learning, advocacy and skills development.

Lori Hocking is the Chief Executive Officer of VETnetwork Australia.

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ROBIN PASCOE

The Arts Curriculum: Raising the standards

The publication of the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts in 2014* was a watershed moment for arts educators across Australia. It represented more than four years of development (and debate) and now provides a vehicle for legitimising and raising the standards of Arts Education in schools. Through establishing curriculum and achievement standards in the Arts, there is an opportunity to address the gaps identified in two significant reviews of arts in schools (*The National Review of School Music Education*, (2005) and *The National Review of Visual Education*, (2008). The Arts were in Phase Two of the development of the Australian Curriculum. Following consultation (2011, p. 4) the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) reported that there was support for: The Arts as stand-alone Learning Areas of the Australian Curriculum. The five subjects were Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts and Design with an emphasis on the entitlement of all students to access all the Arts subjects; and, connections between the Arts industry and schools. This curriculum holds prospects of an Arts

education for all Australian students; something that the two national reviews indicated was eluding many Australian students.

The journey to now

The Australian Curriculum: The Arts (ACARA, 2014) is not the first attempt at writing an Australian Arts Curriculum. The genesis for an earlier arts curriculum lies in the *Hobart Declaration* (1989), which stated that one of the Agreed National Goals for Schooling include - developing in students, an appreciation and understanding of, and confidence to participate in, the creative arts. In 1992, national work was initiated on the development of *A Statement on the Arts for Australian Schools* (1994) and the associated *The Arts: A Curriculum Profile for Australian Schools* (1994). The latter national initiative was passed to States and Territories to implement. Some local jurisdictions implemented the National Curriculum as developed and others developed localised Curriculum Frameworks that included the Arts, for example Curriculum Council of Western Australia (1998).

These documents recognised the Arts as one of eight Learning Areas including Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts and Design. They were at the forefront of reorienting arts education towards the outcomes approach and they articulated a focus beyond the traditional Arts subjects of Music and Visual Arts.

The impetus for the latest round of the Arts Curriculum lies in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008). As a part of the goal that 'all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens' (p. 8), the Arts (performing and visual) were identified as part of the curriculum where there was a 'breadth, balance and depth of learning appropriate to students' phases of development' (p.14). The declaration also identified that 'each learning area has a specific discipline base and each has application across the curriculum' (p. 14).

In retrospect each of these documents is a palimpsest, that is, something reused or altered, but still bearing visible traces of its earlier form, written over what has gone before.

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The impetus towards an Arts Curriculum has not only sprung from the education sector. A key to this process of overwriting has been the strong advocacy offered by arts-based professional associations and what is now the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE).

There has been notable international research and advocacy through the *UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education* (2006) and the *UNESCO Seoul Agenda for Arts Education* (2010). *The Wow Factor – Global Research Compendium on the Impact of the Arts in Education* (Bamford, 2006) provided an international perspective on why the Arts should be part of the curriculum for all students. In Australia the Ministers of Culture and the Arts jointly with the Ministers of Education published a *National Statement on Education and the Arts* (2007) that built a case for the arts focused on creativity, ‘Schools that value creativity lead the way in cultivating the well-informed and active citizens our future demands’ (p. 3).

The Arts in the Australian Curriculum

The Arts in the Australian Curriculum is written for Foundation to Year 10 students. There are a number of clear principles embedded in the curriculum design:

- The Arts Learning Areas draw together five related but distinct art forms/

subjects: Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts and Design.

The reasoning behind including five Arts subjects is that ‘each subject focuses on its own practices, terminology and unique ways of looking at the world’. The curriculum notes that ‘while these art forms have close relationships and are often used in interrelated ways, each involves different approaches to arts practices and critical and creative thinking that reflect distinct bodies of knowledge, understanding and skills’. These include:

- The curriculum in each Arts subject reflects the interrelated strands of making and responding. ‘Making and responding are intrinsically connected. Together they provide students with knowledge, understanding and skills as artists, performers and audience and develop students’ skills in critical and creative thinking’.

Making includes learning about and using knowledge, skills, techniques, processes, materials and technologies to explore arts practices and make artworks that communicate ideas and intentions. Responding includes exploring, responding to, analysing and interpreting artworks.

- In both making and responding, students consider a range of viewpoints or perspectives through which artworks

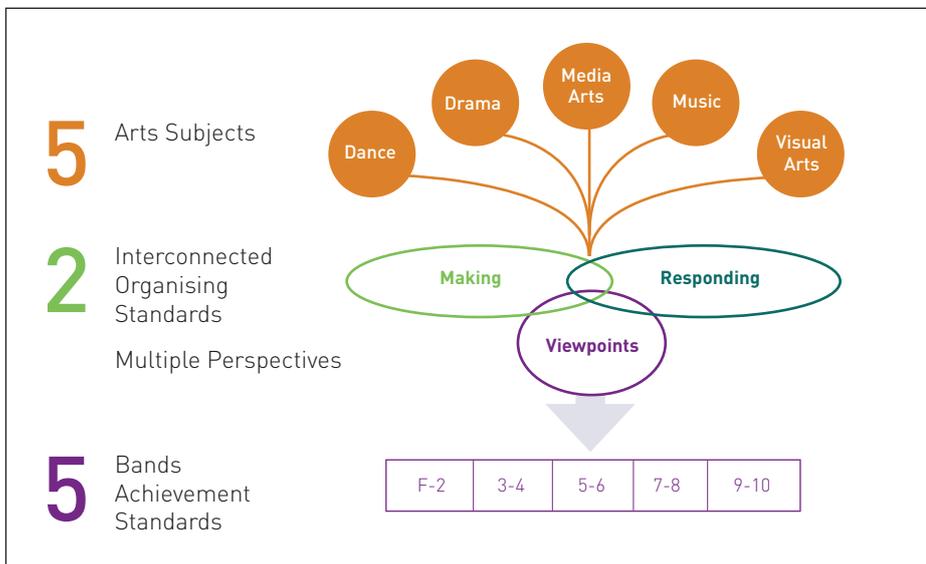
can be explored and interpreted. The world can be interpreted through different social, cultural and historical contexts and students learn to ask and answer key questions as they are developing knowledge, understanding and inquiry skills.

- As with all the Australian Curriculum documents, there are band and content descriptions, content elaborations and achievement standards (bundled together with a rationale and aims and an introduction to the specific Arts subject).

The bands for each of the five Arts subjects are broad two year spans of learning: F-2; 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-10.

- Content descriptions in each Arts subject focus on similar concepts and skills that, across the bands, presenting a developmental sequence of knowledge, understanding and skills. There is an interconnected sense of progression across each Arts subject and each band. The focus of each content description in Foundation to Year 6 expands into more specific content descriptions for Years 7 to 10.
- Achievement standards describe the quality of learning (the depth of conceptual understanding and the sophistication of skills) in each Arts subject that would indicate the student is well-placed to commence the learning required at the next level of achievement. The achievement standards for the Arts reflect the distinctive practices of each subject along with aspects of learning that are common to all Arts subjects as well as the relationship between the interrelated strands, making and responding.

- The Arts Curriculum, as with the other subjects, also include in arts specific terms, the seven general capabilities (Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding) and three cross curriculum priorities (Aboriginal



and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures; Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia and Sustainability).

Reactions to and implementation issues

As many have observed, the Arts Curriculum, taken as a whole, is multilayered and complex. The difficulty in explaining its complexity to teachers, parents and the wider community (and to teacher education students) highlights this issue. On the one hand, there is a need for clarity and elegant simplicity, and on the other is a danger of reductive oversimplification and loss of the essence of what makes the Arts what they are - creative, complex, innovative and challenging.

In the context of the crowded primary school curriculum, there have been calls to thin down the curriculum complexity, or even to reduce the curriculum from the existing five Arts subjects. This theme was picked up by the *Australian Government's Review of the Australian Curriculum* (2014). In the States and Territories tasked with implementing the curriculum in classrooms, there has been a variety of responses. For example, in Western Australia the School Curriculum and Standards Authority has under development a year-by-year syllabus based on the Australian Curriculum.

The current curriculum document sidesteps the challenges of implementation. The design brief for the Australian Curriculum excludes issues of pedagogy or deals with them implicitly. As an education nation we have already been at this point. *Augmenting the Diminished, the National Review of School Music Education* (2005) provided evidence of gaps in Music (and Music is only one of the five Arts subjects). Implementation needs to be multi-faceted including addressing the role of principals and school leadership and accountability mechanisms. The best written and consulted curriculum document will fail unless it is successfully supported. Put simply, it is time to stop writing Arts Curriculum and to find ways of implementing it.

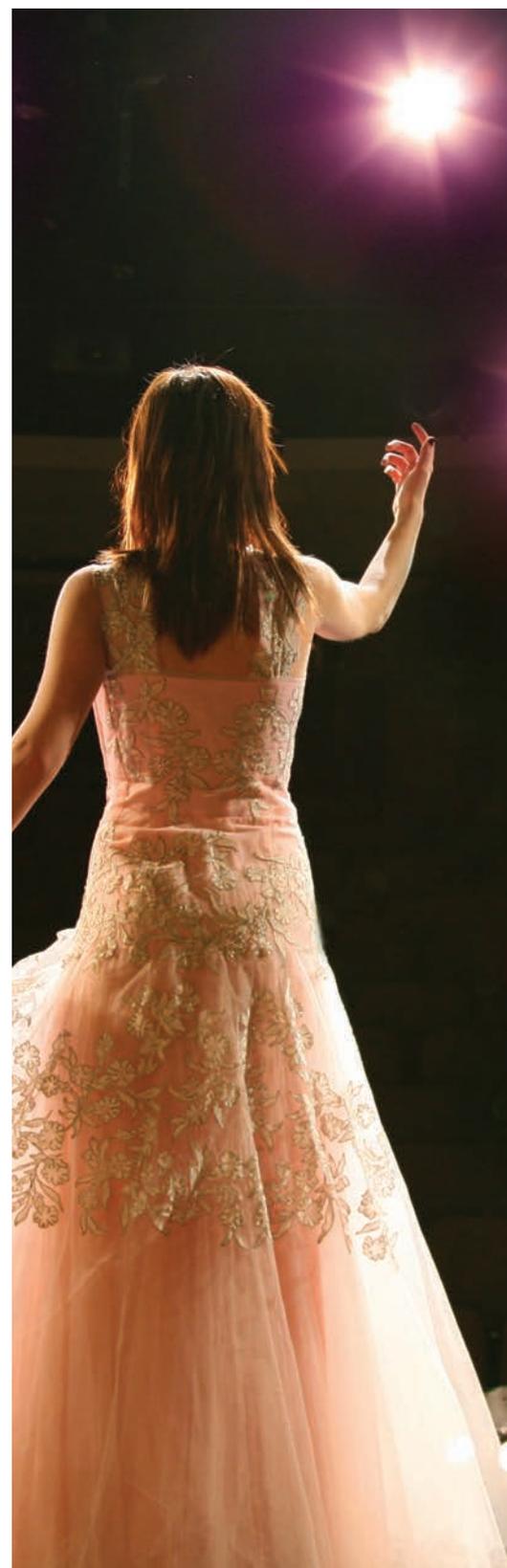
Arts education into the future

Over the period in which the Australian Curriculum has been developed, there has been changing rhetoric particularly around the subjects in Phases 2 and 3— beyond the original firm commitment in Phase 1 subjects of English, Mathematics, Science and History. What is needed is an appetite for moving into the full and effective implementation of Phase 2 subjects such as the Arts, not just to be curriculum compliant but because learning in the Arts provides something that is unique and valuable. In learning to be an artist and an audience, our students develop creativity and critical thinking through an aesthetic perspective; they build capacity to express and communicate in ways that are more than words can say; and they connect with their personal, social and cultural identity.

The standard for Arts education for all students needs to be found in quality Arts Programs that are well taught. The imperative for Arts education includes, but does not rely solely on the benefits of the Arts per se. Maxine Greene (1977, p. 18) observed that 'educators can help awareness feed into an expanding life of meaning'. In announcing the inclusion of the Arts in the Australian Curriculum development, the then Minister for the Arts noted: 'Creativity, interpretation, innovation and cultural understanding are all sought after skills for new and emerging industries of the 21st century. Arts education provides students with the tools to develop these skills' (Garrett in Pratt, April 17 2009).

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Changing pedagogies

JACOB ELMS

The impact of NAPLAN and MySchool on teaching practices

The introduction of the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the school reporting website, MySchool, marked a significant change in education within Australia. The NAPLAN testing scheme was introduced to students in Years

3, 5, 7 and 9 and accompanying this policy MySchool was then introduced in 2010. Together, these transformative education policies aimed to measure and report on students' skills in literacy and numeracy (MySchool Factsheet, 2010).

NAPLAN consists of four domains: Reading, Writing, Language Conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and Numeracy (ACARA, 2011). The NAPLAN results for each school are published

on MySchool and accessible to the general public and media. Implemented as a measure of achievement and educational transparency, these policies have changed the nature of education within Australia in many ways (Cumming and Mawdesley 2013). Researchers have identified changes to pedagogical practice, social efficacy and student motivation and wellbeing when preparing for NAPLAN (Dreher, 2012; Thompson



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and Harbaugh, 2013). The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) suggests that NAPLAN and MySchool promote accountability and transparency, and provide parents and members of the community with access to important educational information (ACARA, 2010, 2011, 2013). Conversely, teachers, educational leaders and researchers stipulate that NAPLAN and MySchool introduce a raft of negative consequences for students and teachers. Pressures have increasingly mounted upon teachers to improve the NAPLAN results of their students by any reasonable means (Wyn, Turnbull, & Grimshaw, 2014). School comparison and data tables have cemented these policies as high-stakes and the impact of these pressures has resulted in a dynamic shift in teachers' pedagogical practices to accommodate the demands of NAPLAN testing. Let us review existing research in order to explore the extent to which NAPLAN and MySchool have impacted and altered teachers' pedagogical practices.

MySchool and NAPLAN: An overview

To understand the extent of the impact of NAPLAN and MySchool on teachers' pedagogical practices, it is imperative to understand the social and political context of how these policies were drafted and implemented. In the mid-2000s, concerns emerged in Australia surrounding educational improvement and accountability. These concerns and a desire for improvement in education were the foundations upon which

NAPLAN and MySchool were constructed (Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith, 2012). Australia's performance in international education rankings [Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)] subsequently led to increased social and economic pressures to improve the education system (Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith, 2012; OECD, 2012, Savage & O'Connor, 2014). Social and economic fears were mounting that Australia was being left behind in education. In a report on the Australian Schooling System by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), it was determined that it was essential, for the benefit of students, to determine whether they were achieving at National Minimum Standards (DET, 2012). According to former Prime Ministers, Rudd and Gillard (2008), NAPLAN was designed to improve the achievement of students across the nation. Further to this, they outlined that NAPLAN and MySchool would improve equity of outcomes and improve student achievement, which would in turn improve Australia's capacity for economic productivity. Rudd and Gillard (2008) made these claims despite contradicting international research (Menken, 2006; Anagnostopoulos, 2003) citing concerns of diminished pedagogical practices and classroom engagement. Even with this evidence and protests from educational professionals, support from politicians and sensationalism by the media led was implemented NAPLAN and MySchool (Australian Teachers Union, 2010).

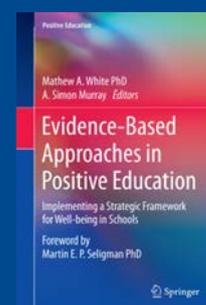
Impact on teaching within Australia

Studies from the US and the UK indicate that high-stakes testing and public comparison models of education have a negative impact upon teachers' pedagogical practices (Patrick, 2008; Jones, 2007). In many studies, teachers believe they are required to significantly alter their pedagogies (Menken, 2006; Preece and Skinner, 1999). As a result, teaching and learning pedagogies are shifting from a student-centred to a teacher-centred approach (Au, 2011), often decreasing creativity and higher order thinking. The high-stakes nature of NAPLAN and MySchool has resulted in a narrowing of curriculum and a culture of teacher fear. Culturally responsive classroom dialogue and teaching is becoming increasingly rare as teachers are forced to undertake new static pedagogical practices to meet NAPLAN standards. Teachers are reporting through industrial feedback (Australian Teachers Union) that they are either electing to teach to the test, or being instructed to by fearful school leaders who are desperate to achieve higher NAPLAN results (Australian Teachers Union, 2010). There is also a reduction in the teaching of non-NAPLAN reviewed subjects and decreased student engagement due to the one size fits all nature of standardised testing (Thompson and Harbaugh, 2013). These pressures force teachers to make choices between being responsive to individual learning needs and balancing the need for the school to achieve well on NAPLAN testing (Thompson and Harbaugh, 2013). This shift in pedagogical focus is fuelling

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frustration amongst teachers as their professional expertise, understanding of students and teaching methodologies are being increasingly marginalised (Reid, 2009).

Although the impact of NAPLAN and MySchool on pedagogical practices has been felt by teachers across the nation, its most prominent impacts have been in low socioeconomic schools (Cormack and Comber, 2013). As a school's reputation is becoming increasingly dependent on NAPLAN results, those that perform poorly are increasingly stereotyped as 'bad' schools (Redden and Low, 2012), impacting enrolments and subsequently funding. This puts the school into a cycle of doing whatever it takes to improve NAPLAN scores and recover public opinion. Unprecedented pressure is placed upon teachers within these schools to improve NAPLAN scores (Wilson and Hornsby, 2014). Pressures associated with achieving higher NAPLAN results has impacted teachers from all schools and ultimately stems inspired and responsive teaching (Angelo, 2013).

Since the introduction of NAPLAN and MySchool, teachers have expressed their frustration at the lack of opportunities to select appropriate pedagogies due to their need to cover content for NAPLAN (Thompson and Harbaugh, 2013). Teachers have outlined that they now need to focus on covering concepts of NAPLAN instead of being responsive to individual learner needs (Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith, 2012). Struggling students are also given less time to master concepts due to time pressures to cover content. They are often further disadvantaged as previous, and successful, approaches are foregone due to the imposed need to focus upon aspects of NAPLAN (Comber, 2012).

Implications for classroom teachers

NAPLAN and MySchool have had significant impacts upon the pedagogical practices of teachers. It is becoming increasingly difficult for teachers to balance the needs of students against the need for performing on NAPLAN tests (Angelo, 2013). As such, many teachers

have adopted didactic approaches to teaching in order to satisfy the demands of NAPLAN (Wilson and Hornsby, 2014). Classrooms are becoming less vibrant, less inclusive places that discourage interactive learning and are becoming lecture styled, static sources of information delivery. Inspired teaching and learning is becoming less apparent as teachers increasingly forgo spontaneous teaching opportunities to cover the content for NAPLAN.

Directions forward

NAPLAN testing can only deliver a snapshot of student achievement and is limited in providing information on how well students are learning the curriculum. Stakeholders within education and the wider community need to recognise this to ensure the tests are seen for what they are: a modest and partial indication of student achievement (Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith, 2012). No testing model should undermine teachers' professional abilities. Instead, judgement should be at the forefront of efforts to improve learning outcomes. Professional development programs for teachers are required to assist them in developing their understanding of measuring significant assessment (Angelo, 2013). The designs of these tests must be open for scrutiny and feedback utilised to increase their effectiveness. An alternative system of accountability needs to be intelligently constructed and aware of the complexities associated with assessment. This could include national testing complemented by teacher assessment and moderation.

NAPLAN and MySchool have had a pervasive negative impact upon teachers' pedagogical practices within Australian schools. Although research suggests a myriad of differing issues related to the influence of these policies on pedagogical practices, there are several that stand out across studies. Firstly, NAPLAN and MySchool have forced teachers to alter their pedagogical practices to a teacher centred approach to prepare for the test. Secondly, there is no indication through empirical evidence of improvement in literacy and numeracy since the implementation

of NAPLAN and MySchool (Dreher, 2012). Finally, classrooms are becoming increasingly less inclusive and engaging for students (Thompson and Harbaugh, 2013). Teachers are now constantly at odds with balancing good teaching and preparing students for NAPLAN testing. Students, especially those in need of enhanced support, are receiving less assistance from teachers due to the pressure to cover concepts for NAPLAN. As a country and an education system, it is time to move past NAPLAN testing as the sole indicator for student success. The complex nature of learning and achievement needs to be recognised over time through the use of teacher centred assessment, along with supporting standardised measures.

Jacob Elms is a Senior School Teacher at John Paul College, Melbourne.

For the full reference list please email Jacob Elms at jelms@jpc.qld.edu.au.

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Federalism in education: A changing landscape



ACE's Symposium on 'Federalism in Education' was held at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) on 30 April 2015. The event attracted a large audience to hear presentations and engage in an interactive panel debate with Professor Robert Lingard, Dr Glenn Savage and the Hon. Bronwyn Pike.

The symposium provided a rich insight into the changing nature of Australian schooling and the shifting roles of governments in developing and implementing education policies.

Professor Lingard began the proceedings with an overview of federalism and schooling from the time of the Whitlam Government to the present day. Professor Lingard also analysed processes associated with the current *Reform of*

the Federation review led by the Federal Government, which is examining the roles and responsibilities of Federal, State and Territory Governments in education.

Dr Savage looked at how reforms associated with the Australian Curriculum and the development of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) were reshaping the role of state education departments and curriculum agencies. Dr Savage suggested the changing dynamics of curriculum policy means it is 'increasingly difficult to know who is steering the ship of Australian schooling', and posed questions about the future of state agencies in curriculum development.

Ms Pike reflected on the changing roles of Federal, State and Territory Governments in key service delivery portfolios over her period in office (1999-2010), providing unique insights into the politics of schooling reform. Building on arguments made by Professor Lingard and Dr Savage, Ms Pike reflected on how difficult it can be for politicians to pursue the best reform options in a federal system in which debates often become distracted by politics and an interest in 'carving up territory'.

The presentations were followed by a lively discussion, with members of the audience asking a range of questions about the future of schooling reform and Australian Federalism at a time of rapid change.

Graphics

- 1: Mr Ian Keese, FACE and Ms Heather Causley, FACE
- 2: Dr Lawrence Ingvarson, FACE
- 3: Mr Peter Jacob and Professor Bob Lingard, MACE
- 4: Professor Kwong Lee Dow, FACE, Mr Trevor Fletcher and Professor Stephen Dinham, FACE
- 5: Professor Bob Lingard, MACE, Dr Glen Savage, MACE, and the Hon. Bronwyn Pike, MACE



ACE 2015 National Conference: Introducing your Keynotes

This year the Australian College of Educators' (ACE) 2015 National Conference, to be held in Brisbane 24 and September at the award winning Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC), will provide the perfect forum for all educators nationwide to gather and exchange ideas on the teaching profession. The theme for this forward-looking event is 'Educators on the edge: Big ideas for change and innovation.'

Educators across all sectors are adapting to changes and challenges (including technological, economic and social). Through adopting innovative approaches educators are now at 'the edge' and going beyond it to improve student learning. Therefore, this conference encourages educators to share and highlight cutting edge, creative and innovative practices, nationally and globally.

The two-day conference program (www.austcolled.com.au/documents/item/119) is evidence that some of Australia's most prominent education thought-leaders and practitioners have chosen to present at the College event and provide stimulating insight into their current work and research in the education sphere.

Professional educator spoke to some of the speakers about their work, Keynote Paper presentations and the current education climate in Australia.



Professor John Hattie
Director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute,
University of Melbourne

PE: What aspect of your current education work would you like to highlight?

JH: Completing a meta-synthesis of research on learning strategies and related Science of Learning Research.

PE: How does your abstract relate to this year's theme 'Educator's on the edge: Big ideas for change and innovation?'

JH: It will include the major findings from this synthesis.

PE: What issue in education is important to you at present?

JH: How to ensure expertise among teachers, leaders, and teacher education is recognised, esteemed and built.

PE: If the current Federal Government was to implement a change in current education policy, which change do you think could improve education for the better?

JH: Privileging teachers, leaders, and teacher education expertise.



Professor Stephen Dinham OAM, FACE
National President of ACE and the Chair of Teacher Education and Director of Learning and Teaching at the University of Melbourne

PE: What aspect of your current education work would you like to highlight?

SD: The research I will be presenting was undertaken in Germany in late 2014-early 2015 when I spent time there as a Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow of the Robert Bosch Academy. It involved comparing the educational landscapes of Australia and Germany.

PE: How does your abstract relate to this year's theme 'Educator's on the edge: Big ideas for change and innovation?'

SD: There are marked contrasts between the organisation of education in both countries. Each faces similar challenges in terms of equity, diversity and performance on international measures of student achievement.

Since 2000, Germany has a highly-regulated educational system and has experienced improvement in its performance on international measures such as PISA. Australia, however, has experienced a general decline in performance over the same period as a result of pursuing greater deregulation in education.

PE: What issue in education is important to you at present?

SD: As noted above, the general trend towards deregulation in education in Australia and whether or not this will lead to the closing or widening of equity and achievement gaps. Many changes are being introduced that have been found to be questionable elsewhere.

PE: If the current Federal Government was to implement a change in current education policy, which change do you think could improve education for the better?

SD: I think there are two key initiatives. The first is to look at the area of teacher pre-service education in the aftermath of TEMAG to ensure that it is rigorous, effective and in line with workforce needs. The second is to target funding in education to those areas that we know have greatest impact, such as teachers' professional learning and instructional leadership. A strong evidence-base is essential for everything we do in education.



Ms Rhonda Livingstone
National Education Leader, ACECQA

PE: What aspect of your current education work would you like to highlight?

RL: My role as National Education Leader (NEL) is an evolving one. I am always looking for new ways to support the work undertaken by the sector to successfully implement the National Quality Framework (NQF). A key focus of my work recently has been the ACECQA National Workshops designed to support educators and providers to meet Quality Area 1 of the National Quality Standard:

Educational Program and Practice. I have worked collaboratively with regulatory authorities and Professional Support Coordination Units in each State and Territory to develop and deliver these workshops across Australia. Although open to all educators and providers, the National Workshops were particularly targeted at services that received a rating of Working Towards the National Quality Standard, or had not yet been assessed. Approximately 3,500 educators across Australia attended the workshops which ran between September 2014 and August 2015.

PE: How does your abstract relate to this year's theme 'Educators on the edge: Big ideas for change and innovation?'

RL: My focus is on how 'Educators on the edge' can develop innovative approaches to improve children's learning with the support of the NQF. The ACECQA 'Excellent rating' is the highest quality rating an education and care service can achieve. It promotes and reinforces the value of quality and recognises the highest efforts of 'educators on edge' in the sector. Through my work as an assessor of education and care programs, as well as my role as Excellent Rating Senior Advisor, I have seen many examples of innovative practice. Services that have received the 'Excellent rating' have promoted far reaching change through creativity, innovation, leadership and commitment to continuous improvement.

PE: What issue in education is important to you at present?

RL: One issue which I have focussed my attention on is clarifying expectations around the NQF, given the strengthened focus is on outcomes (with fewer inputs specified). My work has largely involved supporting educators to consider strategies which are meaningful, relevant and achievable for their situation. The NQF gives educators the opportunity to apply the National Quality Standard with a focus on overall outcomes for children, using strategies which suit individual educators, children, families and communities. The NQF takes into account the context in which the service is operated and empowers educators to engage in practice and meet the

standards in a way that suits their families and community.

PE: If the current Federal Government was to implement a change in current education policy, which change do you think could improve education for the better?

RL: The State, Territory and Australian Governments' investment in the NQF has made a significant impact for the education and care of children. Strong evidence has shown that experiences in the early years of life have long-term impacts. The NQF aims to raise the bar in service quality and supports continuous quality improvement.

In 2014 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reviewed the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care. This included a public consultation and submission process. The Consultation Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) includes recommendations for streamlining the NQF whilst retaining the key features. Governments are currently considering this feedback and preparing a Decision RIS with final recommendations for ministers to review in the near future.



Dr Stanley Rabinowitz
General Manager for Assessment and Reporting, Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority

PE: What aspect of your current education work would you like to highlight?

SR: The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) current research focuses on



answering key questions relating to moving NAPLAN online. A comprehensive research plan is underway to ensure the development of an efficient and user-friendly platform that will enhance national assessment for all students, teachers, parents and policy makers. This research began in 2013 and will continue up to and beyond the launch of NAPLAN online.

PE: How does your abstract relate to this year's theme 'Educator's on the edge: Big ideas for change and innovation?'

SR: The development of NAPLAN online will improve education for all Australian students. ACARA has a leading role in much of this work, in association with various other agencies and involving all States and Territories along the way.

PE: What issue in education is important to you at present?

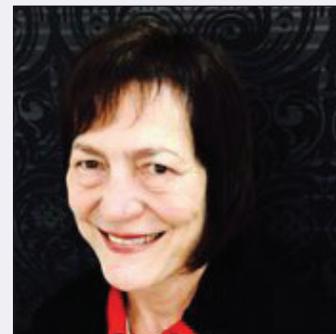
SR: There are a myriad of questions relating to NAPLAN online which have been/have to be explored and answered. The decision to implement adaptive testing (branching test design) and the potential for automated marking of the NAPLAN tests to enable a much faster turnaround of test results may be the biggest of these questions. No decision has, or will be made without solid evidence that the change will benefit students, teachers and schools.

PE: If the current Federal Government was to implement a change in current education policy, which change do you think could improve education for the better?

SR: The Federal Government, States and Territories have already authorised the implementation of NAPLAN online—ACARA's responsibility is to ensure this change is implemented efficiently, reliably and fairly for all students.



Professor Triggs



Ms Vitale, MACE

Human rights and education

The College will be proudly hosting two Keynote Speakers at the conference and Gala Dinner, both of which have a human element to the work they are undertaking.

Professor Gillian Triggs, President of the Australian Human Commission will be presenting on digital literacy among young people and how it has become imperative for educators to embrace technology as part of their pedagogical practices. Professor Triggs will highlight how the commission continues to develop educational resources that combine human rights education with digital technologies.

Education consultant and advisor, Ms Ann Vitale (MACE) is an 'Educator on the edge'. Ms Vitale will be speaking about personal work experience in Kosovo and Iraq providing insights into the challenges inherent in attempting to re-establish and/or rebuild education facilities and programs in countries which are recovering from war, or undergoing conflict.

Visit www.austcolled.com.au/events/category/ace-national-conference and register now to attend this event and Gala Dinner and be part of the debate on cutting edge, creative and innovative practices, nationally and globally.

The ACE 2015 National Conference is generously supported by:

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Bridging the gap of economic disadvantage



PHILIP DE ZYLVA

In my first year of teaching, I had the rare pleasure and surprise of witnessing the transformation of a student's mindset around education. I taught Jake (not his real name) from Indonesia for the duration of 2014. Jake was 13 years old and said he 'hate(d) language' and that it was 'stupid to learn another language in Australia'. Jake was on a slippery slope of disengagement, apathy and poor behavioural choices.

Jake was set on dropping out of school to pursue a future in BMX riding or AFL. He made certain I was aware of this through his disruptive behaviour and refusal to work in class. My experience of teaching Jake reflects the importance of the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching (APST) in relation to quality practice, accountability, and social context.

The APST support Australian teachers to bridge the gap of educational disadvantage. In Australia this gap is alarming and has a clear link to socioeconomic backgrounds. Amongst Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED) countries, Australia has one of the largest gaps between worst performing and best performing children in education. This is based on PISA 2013 data, which states 15 year olds in the lowest socioeconomic

▶ quartile are 2.5 years behind their peers in the highest socioeconomic quartile in Maths, Reading and Scientific Literacy. Furthermore, only 15 per cent of university students come from the most socioeconomically disadvantaged quarter of the Australia's population, compared to 42 per cent of those most privileged (Cassells et al., 2001).

I believe the standards are a key factor to achieving educational equity in Australia by providing accountability, transparency and a pathway to quality teaching and student learning. In my first year as a graduate teacher, it was tempting to sideline the standards and treat them as just another box to tick for certification. This is not a fault with the standards; rather it was my attitude towards them and whether I thought they were useful, therefore not prioritising them appropriately. Negotiating priorities between class planning, pedagogy, administrative requirements, professional development, and the issues and distractions that arise in disadvantaged schools is challenging. However, I have since learnt that if we treat the standards as organising principles for our development, then we are better

preparing ourselves to deal with what is happening in our schools, and we are, in turn, better serving our students.

The standards contribute to improving teacher quality and reducing variability across teacher practice by supporting teachers to be accountable. They provide a baseline to measure performance so that we can improve consistency and quality of teaching. This provides transparency and an expectation for teacher quality nationwide. Accountability to this expectation is essential to addressing educational disadvantage by ensuring that all teachers' performance meets the baseline for quality teaching, and that they prioritise quality teaching in their practice. Accountability for teacher practice stems from having shared values and vision amongst staff. A shared vision is a precursor of effective whole-school community and program success (Lambert, 2002).

During my journey in educating Jake, my colleagues and mentors used the standards to keep me accountable in my practice. This accountability empowered me to reflect on and continually improve the quality of my teaching.

According to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the introduction of the Australian Curriculum across all schools nationwide means that students can expect to receive the same education regardless of where they live (ACARA, 2015). However, the final decision lies with teachers. In my opinion when you are teaching within a disadvantaged area, the implications of sub-standard teaching are more severe than when based in a privileged school.

Currently, if a child is born in the non-metropolitan postcode, lives in a low-income household (Cassells et al., 2001), or has parents who didn't finish high school, they are less likely to have access to quality education and do well at school. One in seven Australian children (under the age of 15) is growing up in a family where there is no one in paid work (OECD, 2011). Statistically, these students are likely to be almost three years behind other students with different social circumstances (PISA, 2012). In Australia, 50,000 students drop out of school each year and as a result fall into a risk of poverty and unemployment (findings of a 2005 survey of 467 young people in juvenile detention centres across Australia, Prichard and Payne, 2005). Disadvantaged children who don't finish school, or who are not given the same educational opportunities as privileged children are far more likely not to find a job (Shannon and Bylsma, 2005), to depend on government benefits (Rumberger, 1987, cited in Rumberger, 1995), go to jail (Wald and Losen, 2003, cited in Shannon and Bylsma, 2005), have an increased likelihood of substance abuse and teenage pregnancy (Woods, 1995, cited in Shannon and Bylsma, 2005), and experience mental health issues (Gibbons, 2006, cited in Kennelly and Monrad, 2007). This affects not just those individual children, but also the community at large through loss of productivity, large burdens on health and social services and the impact on the children's families, friends and other community members (Bellfield and Levin, 2007). As these statistics demonstrate, failure to engage students in quality learning is likely to have a lasting and negative impact on their lives, especially



for disadvantaged students. Ensuring teachers meet the high expectations of the standards is one way to contribute to better teacher practice across Australia and achieve educational equity.

These statistics are familiar to me. My father did not finish school and none of my family members entered tertiary education. Perhaps the most significant factor for me was growing up within a low socioeconomic postcode. For Jake, the prospect of dropping out appeared to be a given. This is concerning for teachers, but it is a reality for many of young Australians.

The standards are useful for graduate teachers as they do not just show what quality teaching can look like, they also show the complexity of teaching and provide practical guidelines on teaching to ensure excellent outcomes for all students. The standards most relevant to my experience with Jake included:

- knowing students and how they learn: Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds (Standard 1.3)
- creating and maintaining supportive and safe learning environments: Managing challenging behaviour (Standard 4.3)
- engaging professionally with colleagues, parents/caregivers and the community: Engage with parents/carers (Standard 7.3).

Educators should conceptualise these standards as a developmental continuum because they allow a teacher to look 'beyond' the present and develop goals for the future. In a similar way, a teacher can treat the standards as any good teacher would treat the curriculum. That is, not just looking at the current year level for their students, but also looking at what comes before and what comes after in order to best build upon prior learning and prepare students for the future.

The only standard that seems to be missing is one that relates to rapport between teachers and students. Of course, rapport is subjective and seldom measured on paper. However, students can and do measure rapport with their

teachers everyday. Rapport can help leverage many situations with a student and is essential in order for a teacher to become the best teacher for their students. We have all had the teacher who inspired us, showed interest in us, and cared for us. Possibly the most powerful was the teacher who accepted us regardless of what we said or did. Rogers (1951) refers to this concept as 'unconditional positive regard'.

Throughout a trying year with Jake, I endeavoured to exercise unconditional positive regard and in turn it helped build rapport. Whatever the situation had been the previous day, each day was new with Jake with no hard feelings and full of fresh opportunities for success. I learnt Jake's favourite football team, players, and BMX statistics, as well as keeping close contact with his family. It was not until Jake moved interstate to a new school that I knew a change had occurred. Jake emailed me at the completion of his first term and said:

I have changed my attitude to my education and decided to do my absolute best at school. My behaviour is going very well and I give you a lot of credit for changing it. You made me a better student! Hope you can help others strive for excellence as you did with me.

As educators of children, I believe we have the noblest of professions as we are at the forefront of educating future generations. As teachers we can have an enormous impact on our students and I believe the standards provide a crucial step in developing inspirational teachers in Australia. That is, teachers that provide quality teaching to all children and address educational disadvantage.

Philip De Zylva is a Secondary Teacher at Gold Creek School, ACT and is currently completing his Postgraduate Diploma of Education at the University of Melbourne.

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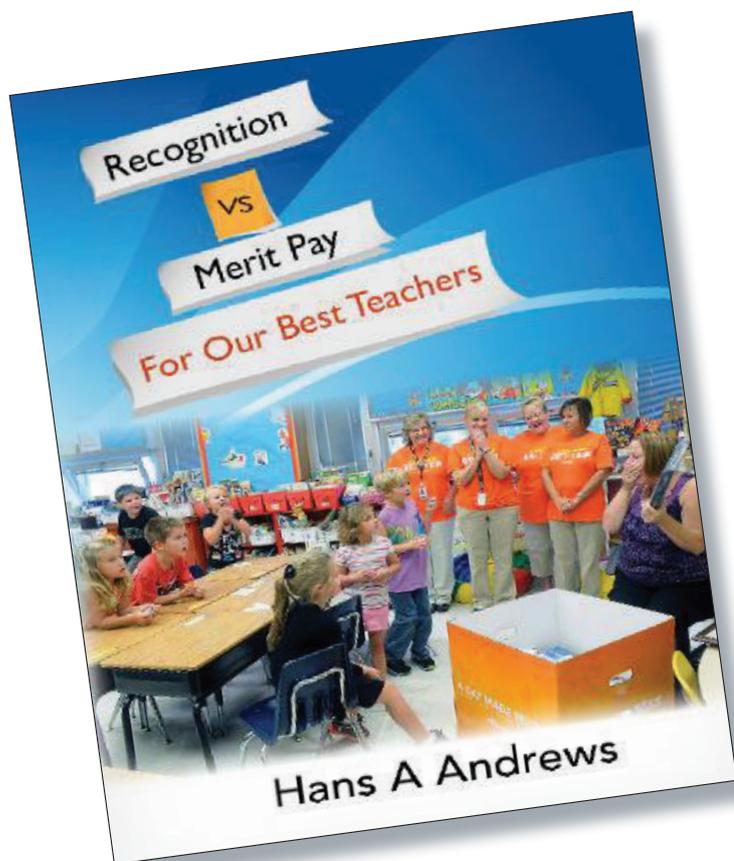
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Recognition vs Merit Pay for Our Best Teachers by Hans A Andrews

Book review by Stephen Thomson,
MACE

Author Hans A Andrews takes on an emotional and political topic in this short book. Comparing and contrasting merit pay and recognition is an ongoing and often divisive discourse. In terms of an organisation's strategic planning the human resource is the most valuable asset, but also the most costly. Validating staff is critically important in any organisation and as the author points out, teachers are the most vital link in good education (p. 25). Or to quote another book, Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the author states employers ought to treat their employees as they'd have their employees treat their best customers. The relational nexus of the teaching learning equation and the broader stakeholder landscape of 'recognition vs merit pay' tends to polarise those involved. We all like to get a pat on the back for a job well done, and in most areas of life we pay on merit.

For someone new to this discourse, *Recognition vs Merit Pay for Our Best Teachers* is an encouraging although a light read. Realistically both merit pay and recognition alone are flawed and both appear in various forms in Australian schooling in a cyclical merry-go-around. Andrews' message is that individual schools can get it right, whereas systems find it harder to implement consistently and affirmation needs to be set as an agenda by school leadership.

This book advocates recognition over merit pay with testimonials from the author's friends and colleagues in the US and Australia where he spent time employed as a teacher. Many of Andrews' statements are based on research that is aging, some of which is approaching 30 years in age. However, the debate he puts forward is perennially valid and highly relevant in the current Australian education landscape. A school's employees, in this case its teachers, need to feel appreciated and important to the school.

Andrews states in Chapter 1 'Teacher Recognition, Meeting Human Needs':

Several studies have found that praise and recognition for one's good work, goes much further to meet the needs and others in a school district or school than the concept of merit pay (Page 19).

This quote demonstrates that many could argue both terms are important because recognition is also a part of merit pay.

Andrews is also saying, having met the basic need for recognition, teachers begin to thrive in realising their potential and move toward professional self-actualisation.

The back cover blurb lists a major emphasis in the US and Australia and some other countries to improve student learning outcomes through merit pay programs. And that research shows that merit pay has been almost universally a failure in raising student learning levels. True and couching, recognition vs merit pay in the schooling mainframe both have little to do with pedagogy and performance levels. However, both will continue to have a significant bearing on teacher motivation and retention.

Stephen Thomson, MACE is Principal Executive Officer at Yalya-binbi Institute for Community Development (YBI).



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*Finding of a meta synthesis of
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and related Science of Learning
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Ms Rhonda Livingstone,
ACECQA
*Educators 'on the edge'
implement innovative
approaches to improve
children's learning*



Professor Gillian Triggs,
Australian Human Rights
Commission
*Innovative technologies and
human rights education*



Professor Stephen Dinham
OAM, FACE,
University of Melbourne
*Regulation or deregulation?
Observations on education
in Germany and Australia*



Ms Jodi Schmidt,
TAFE Queensland



Professor Bob Lingard,
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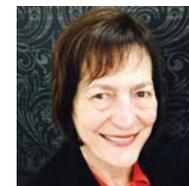
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Australian College of Educators (ACE)

Professional Educator is the College's magazine for members. ACE represents educators across all sectors and systems of education. ACE encourages and fosters open, collaborative discussion to enable all members to provide the best outcomes for Australian students across all levels of education.

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