



Australian College of Educators
Submission to the draft National Professional Standards for Teachers
Consultation
21 May 2010

Introduction

The Australian College of Educators (ACE) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Draft National Standards for Teachers. The final shape of the professional teaching standards setting process and the context in which it will operate will have a profound influence on priority actions and resourcing to support the national teacher quality agenda across Australia. ACE is a professional association of educators across all sectors with a long and proud history of supporting the profession and advocacy for the advancement of the profession. Thus, the setting of teacher standards is a high priority issue for us.

Background

ACE has consistently advocated on behalf of the education profession for the development of national professional standards for teachers and school leaders according to clear principles and has played a significant 'honest broker' role in an extensive consultation processes that took place between 2000-2003. During this process it became clear that there was an emerging consensus across the teaching profession that the development of standards would be widely endorsed as consistent with the professional status sought by the profession. There was also a very clear message, however, that structures and processes related to standards development and implementation should, involve the profession in partnership with employers and other stakeholders, and that the standards themselves should properly reflect the complexity of the work of teachers.

As an outcome of this extensive consultation process, ACE coordinated the publication of a National statement from the teaching profession on teacher standards, quality and professionalism agreed to by more than 20 teacher associations and unions in May 2003. This Statement (Attachment A) sets out a valuable list of principles to guide the development of standards by the profession. It makes the point that standards are tools for action— tools with which the profession can use in exercising its responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in schools. They could also be tools that fail to serve the quality teacher agenda well. This is why we argue that the context in which standards for teachers are developed and the principles that inform them are critical. These are not capable, in themselves, of assuring the quality of teaching. Their effectiveness relies on their working with other policies, processes and structures. Our comments in this submission focus on these prior issues and pre-conditions because, if we can get these policies, processes and structures right, then the steps that will be required to get the details rights will follow.

Broader context

In terms of the broader context, ACE finds this consultation process to be problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the introduction of a profession-defined teacher standards regime in Australia does not consist in simply producing a rubric of standards categories with dot points for each level of expertise. This is just one part of a process to put in place a standards framework for education in Australia. Consultation on this small part in isolation is not appropriate, adequate or meaningful.

Secondly, this is a broad public consultation, where input is sought from anyone in Australia. It is difficult not to see this as a signal that the input from the profession of education has no more value in this process than that of any other body – in spite of the profession's clear interest and stake in this issue over the last decade and more. Not taking steps to listen to, and not being seen to take educators' input seriously, will not result in the best outcomes.

Our position, in brief, is that we strongly support embarking, with some urgency, on the development of a comprehensive, profession-defined, standards based regime for teaching that will:

- clarify state, territory, Commonwealth and national (MCEECDYA, ACARA and AITSL) roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for different aspects of the work
- work in concert with broader initiatives to support and drive teacher quality including both policies directed to improving individual teachers, and policies and strategies that address the systemic and school wide factors that support, or fail to support, individual teachers
- appropriately reflect the complex intellectual, relational and contextual nature of the work of educational practitioners at all levels
- provide a clear and significant role for the profession as a partner in standards development and implementation processes and structures
- recognise that teachers today are being asked to teach much more challenging content to a more diverse group of learners and that, it is this agenda that needs to be at the centre of standards work
- require comprehensive restructuring of the ways by which systems and schools recruit, deploy, induct, pay, support and provide for continued learning of teachers
- are developed and implemented in a way that is deliberately designed to counter current inequities in the spread of new recruits and experienced and expert teachers – where schools in the most concentrated high need communities have the highest concentration of teacher development needs, but the lowest levels of teacher expertise and experience.

This last proviso is critical because, unless this pattern is changed through well funded and deliberate strategies that are closely monitored, the business-as-usual market based context of teacher hiring, deploying and developing, will increase current inequalities. This is because well-off schools will be in a better position to leverage the new standards frameworks as an additional tool to attract the best teachers. While we are not suggesting that schools should not strive to attract the best teachers, we do argue that the states, territories and the Commonwealth have a clear responsibility to ensure that the different status and purchasing power of schools does not continue to support a de facto structure of inequitable access to quality teaching (in terms of the amount of time with highly effective teachers available to students).

Summary of Recommendations

ACE recommends that

1. Further work is done by MCEECDYA to clarify the future plans for AITSL, DEEWR, ACARA, and state and territory registration boards or institutes in the ongoing development and implementation of the national professional standard; and who will be responsible and accountable for the further implementation of the standards framework including:
 - a) the respective role, responsibilities and accountabilities of AITSL and the relevant state based institutes, colleges or registration boards moving forward
 - b) how teachers and leaders will be assessed against these standards and where responsibility for this will reside – noting that clarity around this will require clarity about the development of non-generic standards (1.d.)
 - c) how the standards will work in relation to industrial matters – e.g. pay scales and career pathways
 - d) roles and responsibilities related to non-generic standards such as standards related to particular disciplines or levels of schooling (e.g. early childhood, post compulsory)
 - e) how ongoing responsibility for strategic development of professional development policies to drive standards and to better align with standards will be managed.

Once these issues are clarified there should be further opportunity for specific consultation with the profession and well as broader consultation.

2. MCEECDYA support the principle that the professional standards for teaching in Australia be profession-defined standards by establishing a working party of the AITSL board that balances representation of teachers, school leaders and a sub-set of employers with a clear decision-making role in the ongoing process of developing a national teaching professional standards framework for Australia.
3. MCEECDYA and the Commonwealth Minister for Education broaden the remit of AITSL to allow AITSL to investigate and provide advice on those aspects of systems and schools policies and processes that are most and least conducive to a lively collaborative staff culture with strong internal accountability at the school level.
4. In relation to equity:
 - a) investigate ways of ensuring that the development, assessment and implementation of accomplished and leading teacher standards are incorporated into school pay and career structures in ways that do not lead to a further widening of teacher expertise and experience disparities between low SES and high SES schools;
 - b) undertake research and develop strategies and policies to ensure that the standards regime can be used as a means to increase the proportion of accomplished and leading teachers deployed to high needs schools and to broaden the 'placement spread' of career entrants so that they can be equally well supported in their first two years; and
 - c) develop metrics on staff turnover and on the average experience and expertise mix of staff in schools, with data and information to be collected annually and monitored using

the MySchool website and to be used for the purposes of setting 'teacher quality access improvement targets'.

5. In relation to assessment of teachers and school leaders against the standards frameworks:
 - a) MCEECDYA agree that work on developing a national approach to assessing teachers and school leaders against the standards be commenced urgently and given a high priority;
 - b) To ensure credibility, rigour and buy-in, MCEECDYA consider how to broaden the consultative and advisory structures of AITSL in order to bring relevant professional agencies and expertise into the development and decision-making process for standards assessment; and
 - c) AITSL ensure that the assessment function for accomplished and leading teacher categories is conducted independently of any particular stakeholder group, such as through panels of practising teachers and school leaders from beyond the applicant's own institution, working at arm's length from, but under the oversight of, the AITSL Board.
 - d) AITSL take a close look at the implications of the standards framework for the goals of the National Indigenous Education Action Plan goal of increasing Indigenous teachers from local communities in Indigenous dominated schools to ensure that the goals are mutually supportive
6. In relation to implications for professional learning arising from a national framework for professional teaching standards, and in the context of decision-making about the future funding of the tertiary education and school sectors, MCEECDYA accept the need for governments to collaborate
 - a) in the development of national resource standards for initial teacher education (including for their pre-service field experience); and for ongoing professional development from the first years of teaching; and
 - b) in the provision of funding for research into professional learning consistent with the agreed national teaching standards.
7. MCEECDYA ensure that ongoing and periodic evaluation of the teaching standards framework is built into the structures and processes for the application of those standards; and that AITSL be tasked to co-ordinate the development and implementation of a comprehensive research and evaluation program across all national and state and territory agencies with responsibilities for assessing teachers against the agreed standards.

1. The need for clarity about roles, responsibilities and structures across national/state and territory bodies

This consultation is taking part in the context of the replacement of Teaching Australia with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). From a professional association perspective, it is obvious that this shift reflects the desire for Ministers of Education and their agencies to play a more direct role in the ongoing development of national initiatives directed to strengthening the teaching profession at state and national levels. This is important because, in the period following the production of the 2003 MCEETYA documentⁱ on a standards framework for the profession, work on professional teacher standards has progressed along three quite separate pathways:

- almost all states and territories established professional registration bodies with responsibility for standards development and teacher registration among other functions. However their ability to apply the standards framework within their states is not consistent
- some but not all discipline specific professional associations developed their own standards
- Ministers of Education through MCEETYA (now MCEECDYA) set up working groups to progress this matter and the national level.

One of the points made in the ACE statement referred to above was about the need for greater convergence and the development of a common approach to teacher standards, quality and professionalism. The announcement of AITSL and the development of these draft standards signals that finally there will be an opportunity to involve all in a coherent and consistent common approach.

However, in developing our input to this consultation we have found that the information available to us does not clarify how AITSL will work and what this might mean for:

- State-based agencies with responsibilities for registration and standards;
- how teacher education course accreditation and standards will work;
- how generic standards and standard frameworks developed and managed by subject specific professional associations will interconnect, if at all.

The AITSL letter of Expectation 2009-2001 from the Commonwealth Minister of Educationⁱⁱ refers to 'consistent national processes and principles to oversee a set of national standards for teaching and school leadership and implement an agreed system of national accreditation of teachers based on these standards'. It is not clear from this if there will be one body with national responsibility or if the role of AITSL is merely to be the custodian of an agreed generic framework with the responsibility for implementation staying with states and territories. If it is the latter then the very different capacity of states and territories to implement an effective regime will not be addressed..

There are some significant core architectural issues that still need to be developed and agreed. Is this going to continue as one generic framework for all teachers across all disciplines and all stages of learning? This does not seem a critical issue while we are just talking about the standards framework itself, but the issue of how teachers and school leaders will be assessed against the standards does need clarification. How does one assess a teacher's knowledge and understanding of the structures and concepts of their discipline without defining what this is?

It is not clear from the expectation letter how the AITSL role (whatever its shape) will relate to the roles that professional associations have played in the development of discipline specific teacher standards. Will they disappear or should they be retro-fitted into the national framework in some way? As Ingvarson notes,ⁱⁱⁱ "expertise in teaching, as in most professions, is 'domain specific', not generic ...These

differences in the nature of teacher expertise are not trivial. ...Without this level of detail, standards are of little use as a guide to professional learning. Generic standards also provide a limited guide to developing assessment tasks suitable for professional certification'

Accordingly, we recommend that

Further work is done by MCEECDYA to clarify the future plans for AITSL, DEEWR, ACARA, and state and territory registration boards or institutes in the ongoing development and implementation of the national professional standard; and who will be responsible and accountable for the further implementation of the standards framework including:

- a) the respective role, responsibilities and accountabilities of AITSL and the relevant state based institutes, colleges or registration boards moving forward.
- b) how teachers and leaders will be assessed against these standards and where responsibility for this will reside – noting that clarity around this will require clarity about the development of non-generic standards (1.d.).
- c) how the standards will work in relation to industrial matters – e.g. pay scales and career pathways.
- d) roles and responsibilities related to non-generic standards such as standards related to particular disciplines or levels of schooling (e.g. early childhood, post compulsory).
- e) how ongoing responsibility for strategic development of professional development policies to drive standards and to better align with standards will be managed.

And that, once these issues are clarified there should be further opportunity for specific consultation with the profession and well as broader consultation

2. The role of the profession in the development, improvement and implementation of a standards based regime

Perhaps the most important unanswered question is how AITSL's standards certification system will gain the respect and buy-in of teachers. Currently, employing agencies dominate the AITSL Board of Directors and only two of the 17 members are schools based. Will MCEECDYA and AITSL invite the profession to be a full and genuine partner in ongoing development and implementation?

Ingvarson, makes the point that when teachers become involved in standards development they develop a strong commitment to them and a sense of ownership. This is clearly demonstrated by the work of national discipline-based associations over the last decade.

The level of ownership of and commitment to professional standards within a profession will depend on the extent to which members of the profession are entrusted with their development and application. It is in the interests of employing authorities and the public that teachers have a strong commitment to their own standards and their application. This certification system should be developed by a partnership of employing authorities, teacher unions, researchers and professional associations.

It is worth remembering that some of the most significant work done on institutionalising professional standards for teachers has been developed and implemented by the National Board for Professional

Teaching Standards in the USA. This Board is governed and operated primarily by highly accomplished teachers.

As a professional association with a long history of advocating for the interests of teaching as a profession, ACE continues to support a strong role for the profession in the development and implementation of professional standards for teachers, while recognising that governments and employers also have strong and legitimate interest in the setting of standards.

It is interesting to note that although the Letter of Expectation to AITSL has a section on working with stakeholders, the first reference to stakeholders refers to leadership institutes within states and territories. The exhortation to develop collaborative relations more broadly is vague at best. The only reference to a formal structure to support stakeholder engagement is to a teacher advisory group. This falls far short of recognizing that the profession through its associations needs to be a partner in all the processes relating to standards development.

ACE welcomes the recent decision by the Commonwealth to ask ACARA to form a working party of educational experts and representatives of principal organisations and teacher unions to provide it with further professional advice on the use of student performance data and other indicators of school effectiveness in relation to the My School Website. Consistent with this decision, ACE argues that a similar principle be applied to the work of AITSL in developing profession-defined standards for teaching in Australia; and that AITSL also be asked to form an appropriately constituted representative and expert working party to provide professional advice.

Accordingly, we recommend

That MCEECDYA support the principle that the professional standards for teaching in Australia be profession-defined standards by establishing a working party that sits under the AITSL board that represents teachers, school leaders and a sub-set of employers with a clear role in the ongoing process of developing a national teaching professional standards framework for Australia.

3. Clarity about the role of teacher standards as part of a comprehensive approach to teacher quality in Australia

The OECD report^{iv} on the determinants of student learning is just one of a large number of studies that conclude that, though the largest variation in outcomes is attributable to social background and student abilities, the most important influence potentially open to policy influence is the teaching, especially teacher quality. There is a widespread consensus that it is good teachers who make the greatest difference to student outcomes from schooling.

Ingvarson notes that historically, Australia has under invested in strategies to ensure the quality and status of the teaching profession. By this he is referring to comparative pay and career structures, quality teacher education and practicum, quality induction and mentoring, standards regimes, professional learning and, most importantly, how these mix of policies and process cohere.

While we support investment in the above, there are strong grounds for also putting a priority on initiatives that take a more systemic approach to supporting sustainable growth in teacher quality. Connell^v reminds us that “even the single-teacher classroom is part of a structured institution, the school, and the teacher is part of a local staff. School and staff are parts of larger institutional systems and workforces.” The ability of individual teachers to contribute to educational outcomes is strongly defined by this structured environment. “Much of what happens in the daily life of a school involves the shared work of staff, and the teachers’ collective relationship to the collective presence of the students (their social class backgrounds, gender, ethnicity, regional culture, religion; and their current peer group life, hierarchies and exclusions, bullying, cooperation, and so on). Much of the learning of students results from the shared efforts of a group of staff, from interactive learning processes among the students, and from the working of the institution around them”.

Whether an individual teacher appears to be performing well depends a great deal on what other people are doing. While the proposed standards framework defines an accomplished individual teacher it does not define or address how agency and school structures, policies, funding and processes support or undermine this role or how the work of an accomplished or leading teacher is effectively leveraged by a school to support the work of other teachers.

Connell urges us to also recognise and support the collective work of teachers and to include in policy considerations an understanding of how the institution of the school as well as broader educational structures are, or are not, effective. The task of improving the quality of teaching cannot be conceptualised only as a matter of motivating, re-skilling or up-skilling individual teachers, classroom by classroom.

Driving an effective standards framework also requires bringing into scope, the school and system processes, traditions, policies, cultures or structures that impact on within school internal accountability, shared identities conducive to intellectual work; relations of respect between teachers and teachers and teachers and students; processes of knowledge sharing and knowledge production and collaborative learning practices. As Connell argues, a lively occupational culture among teachers is not a given. It needs to be fostered, and it can be damaged. This lively occupational culture is a critical dependency for delivering on a quality standards regime for teachers.

Fullan’s paper, written over a decade ago^{vi}, urges policy makers to consider all teacher level reforms from the inside story, the inside – outside story and from the outside-inside story in order to understand the complex challenges of achieving sustainable educational change. He emphasises that teacher quality is fundamentally impacted by the existence of what he calls a collaborative work culture and a shared sense of internal accountability. The existence of these conditions in schools is, in turn, influenced by how broader systems interact with schools. How standards are used to drive professional growth at the individual teacher level will be fundamentally affected by these wider considerations.

This point is also made forcefully by a report on school accountability prepared by the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute^{vii} “An individual teacher’s sense of responsibility, the expectations about students shared by staff, and the school’s internal accountability processes act in sets of close mutual relationships with each other. What appears to matter most ...is the extent of alignment between these three features – whether and how they work together in a coherent manner. How a school responds to external accountability systems is largely determined by a further degree of alignment between the school’s internal accountability mechanisms and the requirements of the external accountability system.” And then, “In schools operating as authentic learning communities, teacher development

encourages 'deep learning' and leads to 'shared norms' of 'deprivatised practice' which thereby induce reciprocal pressures to maintain an unrelenting focus on improvements in the quality of student outcomes. Improved accountability is viewed as a key element in the challenge of transforming a schooling culture into one characterized by both 'high-expectations' and 'high performance'."

These are very powerful arguments for broadening the scope of work of AITSL to include consideration of the interplay between policies to improve teacher quality that target individual teachers and policies that focus on the impact of school culture and the extent to which it supports professional excellence. After all there is a wide range of players from the individual teachers to the teachers' peers, to the principals, to the schools and to systems and employers and finally to standards setting and assessing bodies that will all influence how well the employment and professional contexts of teachers supports them to meet quality teaching standards.

The letter of expectation to AITSL, recognises that these factors are important, at least in part. It refers to AITSL's role as one that will drive transformational change and empower school leaders with strategies that support excellence in teaching in their schools. However school leadership professional development, no matter how good, cannot, on its own, overcome structural impediments such as: funding driven crises that leave principals with no time to exercise instructional leadership, imbedded racism that drives a culture of low expectations; ad hoc, short term funding programs, high stakes school reviews that reduce school morale, or high concentrations of inexperienced teachers in the highest need schools.

We recommend that

MCEECDYA and the Commonwealth Minister for Education broaden the remit of AITSL to allow AITSL to investigate and provide advice on those aspects of systems and schools policies and processes that are most and least conducive to a lively collaborative staff culture with strong internal accountability at the school level.

4. Impact of a standards regime on equity issues

Ingvarson^{viii} argues that salary regimes for teachers in Australia need to:

- provide stronger incentives for teachers to show evidence of increasing professional knowledge and skill;
- give higher status to expert practitioners, the people most central to successful schools; and
- ensure these experts are distributed equitably across schools and school systems. (Ingvarson p1)

How the introduction of a teacher standards regime will relate to these three criteria is a complex matter. The process for developing these standards must be such as to contribute to the achievement of the above conditions.

For example, Ingvarson has assessed the previous attempt to set up an agreed national Advanced Standard Teachers (AST) system to recognise classroom based expertise as not successful. This was because although it was a national initiative the implementation, including the assessment process and the decisions about the relationship of professional recognition to industrial issues were left to states

and territories. He argues that these schemes were weak drivers of change and had little impact on the quality of teaching because they were introduced as part of an alternative career path to give recognition to good teachers to stay in classrooms.

In some states/territories the scheme lacked credibility and came to be seen as having a higher assessment hurdle than traditional promotion pathways and also as a one way ticket to a dead end career path. A modest pay rise was given to the successful applicant, not to a particular position taken up by that applicant. Often there was no change in role, so the benefits to the schools were often nonexistent.

However, most significantly, in terms of equity issues, it had no impact on the unequal and low distribution of the highest quality teachers to the high need schools, because no one moved. However, it did lead to a cost shifting out of high need schools and into high SES schools, because that is where most of the eligible teacher group, who could easily access the assessment processes, were located.

The point we are making here is that whatever processes are agreed about how the accomplished and leading teaching standards are used or not used as part of pay policies and career structures, the impact this is likely to have on the distribution of accomplished and leading teachers across Australian schools should be a priority factor in the decision.

We already have a system where there the vast majority of first year out teachers are placed in the rural, remote, very remote and high need urban and provincial schools because market factors lead to vacancies in these schools that must be filled. This is not adequately acknowledged or addressed in the priorities for the Smarter Schools National Partnership or in the Draft National Indigenous Education Action Plan 2010 - 2014. Care is needed to ensure that the introduction of a teaching standards regime across Australia is not undertaken in such a way as to exacerbate this problem.

Connors noted evidence in a recent report on teacher needs for NSW^{ix} that the introduction of teaching standards had provided a new opportunity for schools with superior purchasing power to provide further incentives to attract the most experienced teachers. She cited the example where one public school with an outstanding reputation for developing its staff had become the target of a recruiting campaign by an independent school able to offer a range of competitive inducements to the best and most promising teachers, thus depriving the former school of the benefits of its investment in professional development. She also referred to the fact of "such independent schools ... demonstrating their capacity, backed by superior resources, to use the new teaching standards being developed by the NSW Institute of Teachers as a framework for salary increases designed to attract and retain teachers".

The relationship of accomplished and leading teacher categories to teacher career structures, to pay structures and most importantly, to the improved distribution of experienced and highly skilled teachers across all schools is a very complex and important question. The three components need to be addressed together. If the first two conditions are addressed now and the third left till later, an important opportunity to put in place bold strategies to improve the average experience and expertise levels in the highest need schools will be lost.

Without strong intervention hard-to-staff schools will not be in any position to use the teacher standards to drive teacher quality because the crisis-driven environment they inhabit, their poorer access to leading and accomplished teachers, the high ratio of new teachers to experienced teachers, and high teacher turnover will work against attempts to leverage this tool effectively. To make matters

even more unequal, we understand that even when highly experienced teachers move to hard to staff schools from high status schools they report a sense of being partly deskilled because the business of managing the multiple and complex problems of their students and their complex learning and behavior issues mean that, in spite of best intentions and high expertise, there is much less opportunity to engage with students at a high intellectual level. We are not talking here about teachers lowering their expectations – this is a separate and very pernicious issue. We are suggesting that even highly experienced teachers who have high expectations for all their students, working in chaotic and challenging environment of high need schools, where wrap around services are not in place and where there is not a rich enough resource base to respond to the social, physical and emotional high order needs outside the classroom, spent a lower proportion of their time exercising their higher order discipline related skills and understandings.

These schools currently struggle with their disproportionate burden of supporting new career entrants having to teach in environments that are much more challenging than those confronting their more experienced counterparts in other schools. If the four proposed teacher professional categories are used across all states and territories within a shared framework of meaning, then for the first time ever it will be possible to collect metrics about the experience mix and expertise mix of teachers by school ICSEA type. This would serve as a baseline to track the effect of policies directed to ensuring that our highest need schools do not continue to struggle with their unequal education burden as well as with significantly less teaching capacity than schools serving more well-to-do communities.

To achieve this, we may need to heed the advice of the Business Council of Australia^x and do more to increase incentives for our best teachers to work in our most challenging schools, to ensure that “every student, regardless of their background or where they live, has access to high-quality teaching and high-quality resources. We would add to this, however, that there is a limit to the power of monetary incentives on their own, to achieve this end. Exit interviews of staff in very remote schools do not identify lack of pay as their issue but do talk about the isolation, inability to access specialist support, lack of access to professional learning, safety, being overwhelmed by the challenges, and lack of service integration. There is a severe lack of research to inform policy in this area.

We recommend, in relation to equity, that:

MCEECDYA task AITSL to:

- a) investigate ways of ensuring that the development, assessment and implementation of accomplished and leading teacher standards are incorporated into school pay and career structures in ways that do not lead to a further widening of teacher expertise and experience disparities between low SES and high SES schools
- b) undertake research and develop strategies and policies to ensure that the standards regime can be used as a means to increase the proportion of accomplished and leading teachers deployed to high needs schools and to broaden the ‘placement spread’ of career entrants so that they can be equally well supported in their first two years.
- c) develop metrics on staff turn-over and on the average experience and expertise mix of staff in schools and to be collected annually and monitored using the MySchool website and set ‘teacher quality access improvement targets’.

5. The Assessment Regime – critical to ensuring that standards properly reflect the complex and intellectual nature of teachers’ work

While there may be broad agreement that professional standards will be beneficial for the profession there will be much higher levels of contestation about how teacher performance against the standards will be assessed and who should do it. This is a very significant gap in the consultation document. In fact, the best way to ‘road test’ the robustness and clarity of the standards may well be to submit them to an assessment development process. This will identify areas that need to be fine-tuned or even completely redeveloped.

In particular, how the standards will be assessed will have a fundamental impact on how well the standards framework stands up to concerns about the adoption of a narrowly technical view of teachers’ work and on the extent to which teachers ‘buy in’ to the framework.

The early attempts in the US to develop assessment approaches that adequately recognised the need for multiple forms of evidence, including evidence based on performance and portfolios to assess highly complex skills and understandings, led to draft models that were, at first, overly burdensome and administratively unmanageable. There will be sensitivities to be navigated to find the right balance point between the complexity and contextuality of the work being assessed and the administrative feasibility of the process. This will be a major challenge requiring a negotiated settlement. The profession must be adequately represented on the body that will do this work. It is worth noting that where the profession has been a major player in the development of standards they have been very rigorous and highly regarded.

One of the key concerns raised by the ACE report in 2003 focused on the need to ensure that teacher standards were not developed within an overtly simplistic compliance framework as auditable competencies able to be assessed, measured and ticked off, box by box. Such a model would not support the concept of education as a complex, relational and intellectual discipline.

This is not a trivial matter. Connell^{xi} argues that teaching is embodied labour, in which the physical presence of the teacher in interaction with the student is central including energy, movement, expression, and fatigue. The book by Hughes on how teachers have influenced prominent Australians^{xii} also makes this point. He notes that when he first wrote about the story of his own encounter with three teachers who made an impact on him he received more mail and comment than in any of his extensive publications. It touched a chord. Teachers’ relationships with students can matter in ways that are remembered for a lifetime for some and for others not at all. There may be excellent and powerful policy and professional reasons for wanting to define what all teachers should know and do, but the reality is far more complex. Teachers who were remembered as a key source of inspiration for one successful Australian may not have been successful for other students and may not have been able to ‘tick all the boxes’ relating to a highly accomplished teacher. Alternatively, they may have been influential because their qualities were a good match for that particular school or even a group of students.

Teaching is not only embodied work and at its best collective work, it is also highly contextualised. Although there is a rich body of research about the relative efficacy of different types of classroom experiences on student engagement and learning progress, the bulk of the research is drawn from mainstream educational contexts. The applicability of these more generalised findings to the very highest need schools and particularly to schools where no child speaks or hears any English outside the

formal classroom has not been well researched. Teachers at schools where there is a high concentration of children from non mainstream social backgrounds “need a model of professionalism that gives them room to move in order to teach well”. (Connell)

The draft National Indigenous Education Action Plan recognises this, with its emphasis on supporting local people, including current para-professional workers in schools, using flexible pathways to maximise their continued retention in the community. These standards need to be inclusive of these contexts. We need to be sure that the way in which the standards are framed does not exclude high quality local teachers in Indigenous schools who have a lot to offer their students in these settings. One possible solution to this situation is to recognise Indigenous education as a specialism with its own sub-set of standards.

Good teaching, then, is not only to a large degree collective, relational and intellectual labour, it is also diverse. A well-functioning school needs a range of capabilities and performances among its teachers. Given the diversity of the pupils and their communities, the school’s teacher community should be similarly diverse. Any definition of teacher quality, any system of monitoring or promotion, that imposes a single and inflexible model of excellence on the teaching workforce – whatever that model may be – is likely to be damaging to the education system as a whole.

This is not intended to re-invoke the idea of the idiosyncratic charismatic teacher in his or her private domain of the classroom. Although teachers’ work is highly complex and is carried out across a variety of contexts there are significant domains of knowledge, skills and attributes on which teachers who are successful draw. These complexities set out above are a reminder that in developing an approach to assessing teachers against these standards the issues that will need to be worked through are possibly even more complex than those that we considered in the development of the draft framework to date.

Finally, there is a need to be somewhat mindful of the context in which this new standards regime is being developed and the heightened sensibilities of many practising teachers about the national transparency initiatives. It needs to be clear that this process is serious about a teacher development and improvement focus and not just an auditing and assessment of teacher performance.

On the positive side, if Australia can get the assessment process right and have good teacher buy-in, the benefits that will flow from this will be significant. The finding from the US experience with standards is that the process of preparing for certification is, in itself, a very valuable professional learning experience. In fact many reported that it was the most valuable professional learning they had ever experienced (Darling-Hammond:^{xiii}). However in England, where the standards have not been profession defined and there is less teacher support, the opposite was the case – with teachers finding the process demoralising^{xiv}.

One of the significant issues will be who undertakes the assessment, especially for accomplished and leading teachers. Ingvarson^{xv} argues that although development of the system should involve a wide range of stakeholders including governments, employing authorities and teacher unions, as well as professional associations of teachers and school principals, it will be vital that the certification agency conducts its assessment function independently of any particular stakeholder group, including teachers’ own professional associations, if its public and professional credibility are to be ensured. This is an important issue that requires considered discussion and consultation.

We are inclined to agree with Ingvarson that the assessment function needs to be conducted independently of any particular stakeholder group. He implies this is the role for AITSL. However, as currently constituted, AITSL is structurally a company working to the remit of education employers.

We recommend that

In relation to assessment of teachers and school leaders against the standards frameworks:

- a) MCEECDYA agree that work on developing a national approach to assessing teachers and school leaders against the standards be commenced urgently and given a high priority
- b) To ensure credibility, rigour and buy-in, MCEECDYA consider how to broaden the consultative and advisory structures of AITSL in order to bring relevant professional agencies and expertise into the development and decision-making process for standards assessment
- c) AITSL ensure that the assessment function for accomplished and leading teacher categories is conducted independently of any particular stakeholder group, such as through panels of practising teachers and school leaders from beyond the applicant's own institution, working at arm's length from, but under the oversight of, the AITSL Board
- d) AITSL take a close look at the implications of the standards framework for the goals of the National Indigenous Education Action Plan goal of increasing Indigenous teachers from local communities in Indigenous dominated schools to ensure that the goals are mutually supportive.

6. Implications for Professional Learning and Education Research

In 2003 an ACE submission to MCEETYA^{xvi} noted that "while the necessity of professional development is widely recognised, current provision falls far short of what the research says is necessary to improve learning outcomes for all students. There are many individually effective professional development programs and activities operating at school and system levels, but the overall pattern of provision is brief, fragmentary and rarely sequential. The capacity of the profession to engage most of its members in effective modes of professional learning over the long term is weak (2002)." This situation has not changed to a significant extent – at least not across all states and territories.

The document is silent on the relationship of the standards framework to professional learning. However the national commitment to a set of professional teacher standards provides a very significant opportunity to increase, not just the quantum, but the focus, reach, take-up, framing and accessibility of professional learning across Australia. After all, one of the primary reasons for introducing a professional standards framework is to drive an increase in the quality, relevance and effectiveness of teacher professional learning.

Ingvarson^{xvii} sees the introduction of standards as the gateway to professional self-direction. A successful implementation of a standards framework that is accepted in broad terms by the education community will clearly lead to an increase in the demand for professional learning that will support teachers to develop in quite specific areas related to the standards framework. It will be important to guard against fragmented, atomized responses to this demand.

Standards provide an opportunity to explicitly link teaching practice to the best of educational research. This is something that needs to improve in education. Currently teachers are not the target or even a key audience for the education research community. Teachers are much more likely to be exposed to articles about the latest new program, or to good news stories about 'what works', with little elaboration or exploration about why, in what conditions and the limits to the generalise-ability of the findings. There is a lot of room for improving in the degree of rigour, relevance, contextualization and critical analysis of the field of educational research. Darling – Hammond^{xviii} notes that where education systems adopted the US National Board professional standards, they acted as a driver for incorporating new knowledge into professional learning. In addition, teachers need to be supported to be, not just passive consumers, but active and critical reviewers as well as co-producers in partnership with non-classroom researchers.

Whether this proposed framework will also act as a catalyst to drive the education research community to consider educational practitioners as a key audience for their work remains to be seen. Getting the research- practice relationship working well is a worthwhile education policy goal in its own right and it is key to enhancing the professionalism of education as a practice. A Standards regime should be designed in such a way as to drive a better connection between education research and education practice.

Teachers need to continually research emerging knowledge and technologies and apply them to the needs of student groups in contexts and circumstances that we also cannot predict. Knowledge and its applications in teaching are inherently dynamic. Connell uses the term meta-competencies to describe some of the fundamental concerns of teachers such as capacities to balance, choose among and deploy specific competencies. For this to be supported teachers need regular opportunities to collectively study teaching itself as a practice and be reflective about their own work and practice.

A good standards regime should support practices that work to overcome the isolation of the classroom and the lack of opportunity for teachers to observe and be observed; to learn from each other; to receive and to actively engage with structured feedback on performance and work within dynamic but shared frameworks and understandings of good teaching practice.

The kinds of professional learning experiences available to teachers and the changes that a standards framework might bring to these offerings should not be left to market forces. This is an opportunity to spread the high quality professional learning structures that exist already in pockets around Australia: where groups of schools involve their staff in professional learning/ research collaborations in partnership with educational researchers; and where teachers actively engage with research about student learning issues but also about the institution of schooling, research that opens up questions and encourage critical self reflection. Currently funding for these kind of endeavours tend to be available at the extremes – from short-term one-off disadvantaged school funding sources and in the wealthier non Government schools that can afford to invest in quality experiences for their staff.

We note that the Letter of Expectation for AITSL includes taking a leadership role in the professional development of teachers and school leaders.

Accordingly, we recommend

In relation to implications for professional learning arising from a national framework for professional teaching standards, and in the context of decision-making about the future funding of the tertiary education and school sectors, that MCEECDYA accept the need for governments to collaborate

- a) in the development of national resource standards for initial teacher education (including for their pre-service field experience); and for ongoing professional development from the first years of teaching; and
- b) in the provision of funding for research into professional learning consistent with the agreed national teaching standards.

7. Evaluation

In order that the impact and reach of the teaching standards are fully understood as a basis for further refinement and development over time, it will be necessary to ensure that ongoing and periodic evaluation of the teaching standards framework is built into the structures and processes for the application of those standards. This will require specific funding and resources, which should be provided by all governments through MCEECDYA.

The teaching profession itself should both inform the development of appropriate evaluation strategies and should participate in specific programs. This could be achieved through professional bodies, including the Australian College of Educators. To this end, AITSL should be tasked with co-ordinating the development and implementation of a comprehensive research and evaluation program across all national and state and territory agencies with responsibilities for assessing teachers against the agreed standards.

We recommend

That MCEECDYA ensure that ongoing and periodic evaluation of the teaching standards framework is built into the structures and processes for the application of those standards; and that AITSL be tasked to co-ordinate the development and implementation of a comprehensive research and evaluation program across all national and state and territory agencies with responsibilities for assessing teachers against the agreed standards.

ⁱ MCEETYA “A National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching”, November 2003
http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/national_framework_file.pdf

ⁱⁱ The Hon Julia Gillard MP Minister for Education, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited, letter of Expectation 2009-2010
URL: <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/ta/webdav/site/tasite/shared/homepage/AITSL%20-%20Letter%20of%20Expectation%20-%2014%20December%202010.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ingvarson AJE Paper in forthcoming edition “Recognising accomplished teachers in Australia: Where have we been? Where are we heading?” p 64

^{iv} Ken Rowe, The Importance of Teacher Quality as a Key Determinant of Students’ Experiences and Outcomes of Schooling, ACER Research Conference 2003

^v Connell, R (2009) ‘Good teachers on dangerous ground: towards a new view of teacher quality and professionalism’, Critical Studies in Education, 50: 3, 213 — 229
URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17508480902998421>

^{vi} Michael Fullan “The Three Stories of Education Reform”
URL: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/818903/The-Three-Stories-of-Education-Reform>

^{vii} Indigenous Education Leadership Institute, School Accountability - Asking some hard questions, November 2008 p 14
URL: http://www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au/docs/papers/School_Accountability_Final-nov09.pdf

^{viii} Ingvarson op cit

^{ix} L Connors Time and tide... A report on the need to invest in the renewal of the public school teaching service prepared for the NSW Public Education Alliance February 2007, p 65

^x Business Council of Australia “Teaching Talent: The Best Teachers for Australia’s Classrooms” 26 May 2008,
<http://www.bca.com.au/Content/101446.aspx>

^{xi} R Connell op cit

^{xii} Phillip Hughes, Opening Doors to the Future: Stories of prominent Australians and the influence of teachers, ACER Press 2007

^{xiii} Linda Hammond-Darling, “Reshaping Teaching Policy, Preparation and Practice: Influence of the National; Board for Professional Teaching Standards”, p.31 in Ingvarson L and Hattie J Assessing Teachers for Professional Certification: the First Decade of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2008 JAI press

^{xiv} Ingvarson L., Assessing Teachers for Professional Certification: The First Decade of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, JAI Press, 2008 p.12

^{xv} Ingvarson

^{xvi} ACE Response to the MCEETYA TQELT Consultation Paper on Standards, February 2003
<http://austcolled.com.au/article/ace-response-mceetya-tqelt-consultation-paper-standards-february-2003>

^{xvii} Ingvarson

^{xviii} Darling Hammond op cit p29

National Statement from the Teaching Profession on Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism

May, 2003

Overview

This National Statement represents the culmination of over three years' collaborative work by the profession on teacher standards, quality and professionalism. Key groups involved in its development include professional associations, unions and other bodies established to support teachers. The purpose of this Statement is to identify common and agreed understandings about professional teaching standards and their relationship to teacher quality and teacher professionalism. Please note that throughout this document the term 'standards' refers to professional teaching standards and that the focus is on identifying major issues, with a view to constructing a firm foundation for ongoing development. A major objective of this Statement is to demonstrate the profession's collective capacity to inform and contribute to national policy and program development on these three interconnected and interdependent areas in a way that complements the work of governments, systems and sector authorities. To that end, it is important to emphasise that the Statement reflects 'work in progress', and that a genuine spirit of cooperation will need to be maintained if the identified issues are to be addressed effectively.

Introduction

What teachers know, do, expect and value has a significant influence on the nature, extent and rate of student learning. The powerful phrase 'teachers make the difference' captures the key role that professional educators play in shaping the lives and futures of their students. Recognition of the critical relationship between teachers and learners highlights the need to better define and communicate what constitutes good teaching.

Professional teaching standards provide a powerful mechanism for achieving these objectives. Teaching is not a standards-free endeavour and most teachers have always understood the essential elements of high-quality professional practice. However, teaching standards do help to make the knowledge and capabilities *explicit*—not only to professional colleagues but also to students, parents and the wider community. They also provide a means through which good teaching can be identified, celebrated and rewarded. Provided the profession can maintain its role as the driver of the standards agenda, these measures of teaching quality can be used in ways that will support teachers individually and collectively.

Many professional associations, unions, employers, registration authorities and other groups have invested considerable time and resources in establishing a rationale for teaching standards, and in working with classroom practitioners to design and trial various models and approaches. There has also been recognition of advanced status in a number of industrial agreements (for example Level 3 Teachers in Western Australia). Underpinning all of this work is the premise that teachers have a fundamental commitment to the effective learning, care and achievement of their students, along with a collective and strategic focus on other professional areas such as research, and curriculum and policy development. The need for greater convergence and the development of a common approach to teacher standards, quality and professionalism have been identified at a number of national forums.

A common theme spanning much of the published work of teacher organisations is the strong connection between professional teaching standards and professional learning. Many envisage standards being used as a framework for continuous professional learning and development which is teacher-directed and controlled. In other words, the process is done *by* and *with* teachers, not *to* or *for* them. Building on this concept, many also see standards being used to support the development of career pathways, with teachers using standards as a means of determining their current position on a learning continuum and charting their own course for higher order learning and professional recognition. Effective professional learning is a long-term personal quest to attain high professional standards.

Standards in the context of quality and professionalism

Membership of the teaching profession involves working towards the following objectives:

- to be knowledgeable about and skilled in subject matter and pedagogy
- to be effective in the care and development of all learners
- to adhere to professional and ethical standards set by and for the profession
- to act as a strong advocate for the profession and the public interest
- to contribute to the development of the knowledge base of the profession
- to reflect a strong ethical orientation across all areas of learning and teaching.

Teachers' professional learning involves the opportunity to engage with research and practice, and the capacity to generate new knowledge and critique the knowledge claimed by others. Teachers achieve high professional teaching standards through various forms of professional learning. Select examples include pre-service training, structured professional development programs, school-based curriculum development, continuous inquiry and action research, supervision of student or beginning teachers, engagement with learning networks and post-graduate study. These activities also provide teachers with opportunities to strengthen the profession by leading, facilitating and supporting others committed to improving the quality of teaching. Other factors influencing the quality of teaching and learning include high-quality supportive leadership in schools and good collegial relations.

Any consideration of what constitutes quality teaching needs to take into account the diversity of context and conditions in which teachers work. The quality of teachers' work is affected by the conditions of student learning. Conditions such as reasonable class sizes, time release, administrative support, well-resourced education settings and access to high-quality ongoing professional development encourage a culture that promotes creativity and innovation. Supportive partnerships with parents and university–school collaboration are also conducive to quality teaching.

Professional teaching standards provide an important mechanism for improving the effectiveness of professional development; informing the means for improving career path opportunities; providing incentives for continuous professional learning; and building capacity for leadership, accountability and quality assurance.

Principles for guiding standards

Professional teaching standards are informed by practice, theory and research, and articulate what the profession believes teachers should know, do and value. Teachers have demonstrated that they can develop publicly credible and professionally challenging standards for professional practice.

In discussions so far, national teacher organisations and stakeholders have reached consensus on a set of principles to guide the development and application of standards. Professional standards for teaching should:

- be the responsibility of, and be owned by, the teaching profession in collaboration with key stakeholders
- be applied in the interests of learners, the profession and the public
- be firmly grounded in an accurate and comprehensive understanding of teachers' work
- provide a framework for teacher qualifications and registration
- recognise the value of both generic and subject-specific standards*
- be clear to the profession and the wider community
- enhance the public perception of and esteem for teachers and their work
- promote teaching as a desirable career, thus contributing to recruitment
- focus on high-level capabilities and be described in terms of professional knowledge, understanding, skills and values
- promote engagement in professional learning throughout a teacher's career, allowing for different points of entry and re-entry to the profession
- acknowledge that context and resourcing will have an impact on implementation and sustainability
- acknowledge the responsibility of employers and the profession to establish conditions conducive to developing and maintaining profession-defined standards.

* Generic standards identify broad capabilities and teacher attributes that apply across a range of subject areas. Specific standards identify the knowledge, skills and values required to teach in particular curriculum areas, levels of schooling and/or other areas of specialisation.

How will standards be used?

Standards could be used to provide a framework for:

- pre-service education, teacher registration and induction
- continuous professional learning
- reflection on and assessment of professional teaching practice
- recognition and certification of teachers who attain standards for highly accomplished professional practice.

In other words, standards are tools for action—tools with which the profession can exercise greater responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Use of standards must be primarily about professional learning. It would be contrary to the spirit of professionalism if they were to be used for punitive or non-developmental purposes. Teachers should use them to create and monitor their own professional learning programs, either individually or as members of learning communities.

National collaboration and the involvement of professional organisations are essential to ensure maximum consistency in the use of both beginning and advanced teaching standards in all states and territories.

There should be flexibility in the use and forms of assessment against standards across different fields to recognise the complexity of teachers' work, the range of contexts in which they work and the different ways in which teachers can meet standards.

Evidence of ability to meet relevant profession-defined standards should be a requirement for entry to the profession and could be a basis for advancement within the

profession and for raising the status of the profession among peers and within the community.

Assessment and certification of advanced standards

Professional certification is an endorsement by an authorised professional body that a member of that profession has attained standards for highly accomplished professional practice. In the school sector, certification might be implemented across a number of fields of teaching and learning. Given the work of national professional associations, state/territory statutory bodies for teachers and the inclusion in some industrial agreements of advanced status payments, a nationally coordinated and consistent approach to professional certification could be further developed. It is important to acknowledge an emerging consensus that any process for the formal assessment of performance for professional certification of advanced standards should:

- be voluntary
- be authentic
- be based on and measured against professional teaching standards
- have peer involvement in its development and execution
- reflect the core business of teaching
- be positively oriented
- use a range of methods and evidence
- incorporate appeal processes.

The processes for assessing the demonstration of standards should be consistent across all fields of teaching and learning and be fair for all applicants. Peer and self-assessment through reflective practice and professional learning communities is in keeping with ownership by the profession.

Where assessor panels are established, they should be composed predominantly of school-based practitioners who are adequately trained in the assessment processes. In these processes it is important that judgments are made against the standards themselves.

Recognition and reward

A nationally coordinated, rigorous and consistent system should be established to provide recognition to teachers who demonstrate advanced standards. There should be no quota on the number of teachers who are able to receive recognition for certification, and the system must be credible to the public as well as the profession. Reward is an important part of the recognition process and reflects the desire of the profession and the community to acknowledge high-level accomplishment in tangible ways, such as increased remuneration, professional leave or other incentives.

The enterprise bargaining process between employers and unions will be an important mechanism for providing substantive 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.

Advancing the agenda

The profession's capacity to develop the common and agreed National Statement on Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism is significant. It demonstrates genuine collaboration, the results of which are already contributing to policy and program

development at various levels. A major strength of the Statement is the provision of a solid platform for ongoing work. However, it is important not to overstate the case—many questions and issues remain to be addressed.

One of the most valuable outcomes of the extensive consultation process associated with the development of the Statement was the quality of the feedback. Teachers, their organisations and other stakeholders identified the need for ongoing debate and action on a number of issues including:

- What are the distinctive contributions that employers, unions, governments, parents and other stakeholders can make in relation to teacher standards, quality and professionalism?
- How can the profession and other stakeholders work towards further common understanding of these concepts, purposes, processes and intended outcomes?
- How can professional teaching standards be used to create new knowledge and diversity in professional practice (that is, standards not standardisation)?
- What is the interface between professional teaching standards, performance review and assessment, and other industrially based workplace practices?
- What processes should be initiated for the ongoing review of teacher standards, quality and professionalism?
- What is the best way to achieve national coordination and consistency with regard to the implementation of professional teaching standards and professional certification for highly accomplished teachers?

There are many ways in which such issues might be explored in greater depth. Examples include the development of discussion papers, professional dialogue, e-learning initiatives, commissioned research and taskforces. The processes associated with the development of this Statement suggest that genuine collaboration and cooperation will be fundamental to the success of further initiatives. Similarly, all stakeholders will need to assume a proactive role in advancing the agenda in ways that reflect an in-depth understanding and appreciation of the value of pursuing a common and agreed approach to teacher standards, quality and professionalism in Australia.

Organisations represented on the Reference Group that produced this National Statement included:

AAMT	Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers
AARE	Australian Association for Research in Education
AATE	Australian Association for the Teaching of English
ACCE	Australian Council for Computers in Education
ACDE	Australian Council of Deans of Education
ACE	Australian College of Educators
ACEL	Australian Council for Educational Leaders
ACSA	Australian Curriculum Studies Association
AEU	Australian Education Union
ALEA	Australian Literacy Educators Association
APAPDC	Australian Principals Association's Professional Development Committee
ASTA	Australian Science Teachers Association
BTR	Board of Teacher Registration, Queensland
IEUA	Independent Education Union of Australia
NEF	National Education Forum

It should be noted that collaboration and cooperation with the work of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs' (MCEETYA) Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce (TQELT) was maintained during the course of this project. The purpose of this interaction was to promote the exchange of information on processes of development for the National Statement from the Profession and the National Framework for Standards for Teaching. The support of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training to implement this project is gratefully acknowledged.