

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 454 154

SP 039 921

TITLE Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms. A National Discussion Paper.

INSTITUTION Australian Coll. of Education, Curtin.; Australian Curriculum Studies Association, Deakin West.; Australian Association for Research in Education, Melbourne.

PUB DATE 2000-10-00

NOTE 17p.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS \*Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; \*National Standards; \*Teacher Competencies; Teaching Skills

IDENTIFIERS \*Australia; Canada; Professionalism; \*Professionalization of Teaching

## ABSTRACT

This discussion paper provides a rationale for the development of professional teaching standards in Australia. It is the result of a 2000 national forum on professional teaching standards held in Melbourne, Australia, which included 150 educators who explored contemporary issues associated with such standards and constructed a framework for collaborative and strategic action. The paper is designed to stimulate discussion about the need to identify and deploy standards of professional practice for accomplished school teachers. Nine sections examine: (1) "Purpose of This Discussion Paper"; (2) "The Broader Professional Teaching Standards Agendas"; (3) "Some Threshold Questions and Issues"; (4) "What Constitutes a 'Profession' and What Does it Mean To Be a 'Professional'?" (5) "Why Does the Teaching Profession Need Standards of Accomplished Professional Practice?"; (6) "Who Would Benefit From the Identification and Use of Standards of Accomplished Professional Practice?"; (7) "How Have Some Other Countries Addressed the Issue of Professional Teaching Standards?" (8) "Upon What Premises and Principles Ought the Identification and Use of Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms Be Based?"; and (9) "What Should the Accomplished Australian Classroom Teacher Know, Understand, Do, and Value?" (Contains 33 references.) (SM)

# STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FOR ACCOMPLISHED TEACHING IN AUSTRALIAN CLASSROOMS

... the (teaching) profession has yet to build its own infrastructure for defining high quality teaching standards, promoting development towards those standards and providing recognition for those who reach them; in other words, teaching has yet to build a professional development system based on profession-defined teaching standards ...

(Ingvarson 1998: 3)

## A National Discussion Paper

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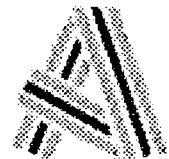
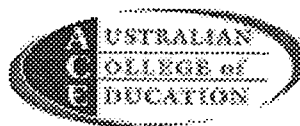
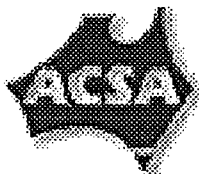
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## Context

A national forum on professional teaching standards was conducted in Melbourne on 24-25 February 2000. Around 150 educators assembled to explore contemporary issues, challenges and opportunities associated with such standards and to construct a framework for collaborative and strategic action. Co-hosted by the Australian College of Education (ACE), the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) and the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE), the forum was supported by a number of sponsors.

One outcome of the forum was the publication of a comprehensive report in the journal *Unicorn*, Vol 26 No 1, April 2000. The full text of this report can be accessed via the Internet at [www.austcolled.com.au](http://www.austcolled.com.au), by clicking on the 'Resources' menu. Another outcome was a proposal to establish a Strategic Working Group to take the debate generated during the forum to the next level. Established in May 2000 by the original co-hosts, this Group was charged with the responsibility of preparing this national discussion paper - *Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms* (for details of the Strategic Working Group, please see page 14 of this paper).

Essentially, this document provides a rationale for the development of professional teaching standards in Australia. Given that this is a discussion rather than a position paper, the emphasis is on generating debate in response to a series of questions, including the following. What constitutes a profession and what does it mean to be a professional? Why does the teaching profession need standards of accomplished teaching practice? Who would benefit from the identification and use of standards of accomplished professional practice?

Drawing on recent developments at national and international levels, the paper identifies and explores a variety of premises or principles upon which standards of accomplished teaching professional practice could be based. The paper concludes by offering a set of interdependent qualities that could be said to reflect the ways in which accomplished teachers in Australia demonstrate their professionalism in contemporary contexts.

It is important to acknowledge that this paper has also been informed by the work of three national research and developments projects under way in Australia at present. Jointly funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC), the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE)/Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA), the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT) and the Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA), these projects are designed to develop professional teaching standards in three curriculum areas, namely, English/Literacy, Mathematics and Science. For contact details regarding these projects please see page 14 of this paper.

In August an earlier draft of this Discussion Paper was distributed, for comment and feedback, to all who attended the national forum earlier this year. The comments received have been taken into account in the final drafting of this Paper which will also be readily accessible through a variety of websites and hot links from late September 2000.

All responses to the paper should be forwarded to:

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by no later than **FRIDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2000**.

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# STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FOR ACCOMPLISHED TEACHING IN AUSTRALIAN CLASSROOMS

## 1. PURPOSE OF THIS DISCUSSION PAPER

This Discussion Paper seeks to stimulate discussion within and across the Australian educational and broader community about the need to identify and deploy standards of professional practice for accomplished school teachers.

This is a 'discussion' paper. It is not a 'position' paper.

No single individual, organisation, research project, government body, professional organisation, lobby group, network of power and influence - or any permutation or combination of these and other influences - has or deserves to have exclusive ownership of this agenda. But the Australian College of Education, the Australian Curriculum Studies Association and the Australian Association for Research in Education have jointly issued this Discussion Paper in order to stimulate national discussion on many of the issues on this agenda.

This document has been written in the knowledge that its potential readership ranges from experts who are already familiar with the massive literature, research and scholarship in the field - right across the spectrum to those without such knowledge but who have sufficient interest in or commitment to the need for professional standards of practice for school teachers to want to engage in the national discussion process.

### 1.1 The Fundamental Question: What Constitutes Accomplished Teaching?

This Paper attempts to address the fundamental question with which school teaching must be challenged as a profession: "what constitutes accomplished teaching?" Or, to put it another way, having regard to all the different learning contexts within which teaching takes place, what ought to be meant when the term "accomplished" is used to describe a classroom teacher? What are the kinds of professional knowledge, understanding, skills and values that ought to characterise accomplished classroom school teaching in Australian schools?

If the profession were to move towards agreement on what constitutes accomplished teaching within and across subject or discipline areas and within and across the wide variety of classroom teaching contexts ranging from pre-school to post-compulsory senior colleges and other forms of school education and training pathways, it could approach with considerable confidence some of the other questions also currently being asked in the context of professional standards, such as:

- ♦ what constitutes satisfactory, but not accomplished, teaching?
- ♦ to what extent should teacher registration/certification be a voluntary or a mandatory process?

- ♦ what kinds of professional development might be appropriate for teachers evincing, *satisfactory* as distinct from *accomplished* standards?

This Paper assumes that "accomplished" is not a term to be restricted only to those with extensive experience. There can be "accomplished" beginning, mid-career, and long-experienced teachers: just as there can also be mediocre and poor teachers right across the career spectrum.

### 1.2 Two Intersecting Perspectives

The development of professional teaching standards internationally has had both 'generic' and 'specific' perspectives. This Discussion Paper sets out to pull together and distil the issues associated with the first of these perspectives. Its purpose is neither to endorse a particular set of generic teaching standards, nor to formulate specific professional teaching standards within and across classroom subject-curricular/teaching contexts.

But it has taken cognisance of the three ongoing Australian Research Council (ARC) SPIRT Grant national projects that are attempting to develop professional teaching standards in the three specific curriculum areas of English/Literacy, Mathematics, and Science and which are due for completion at the end of 2001.

The most comprehensive undertaking to identify standards of accomplished teaching has been that of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the USA. The Board spent its first few years in widespread consultations, review of the existing literature, and collaborative deliberations in an attempt to answer the very question posed in this Discussion Paper. It eventually came up with its "Five Propositions of Accomplished Teaching" (see later). Having established this generic framework, the Board - in intense collaboration with the national subject and other relevant school teaching associations - then set up processes for identifying standards in all school curriculum subject areas and across all school teaching contexts. The other very impressive international teaching standards project, that of the Ontario College of Teachers, while not focusing exclusively upon standards of *accomplished* teaching, arrived at a set of five interdependent sets of generic descriptors of standards of practice for the teaching profession as a whole in Ontario.

Unlike the processes adopted by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards in the USA, each of the three Australian ARC-SPIRT grant projects is operating relatively independently of each other, with differing methodologies, and without any a priori agreed framework of what constitutes accomplished teaching.



It is hoped that, through this Discussion Paper and through the published outcomes from the three ARC-SPIRT Grant projects (and any other subsequent national projects in any of the other nationally agreed Key Learning Areas or any particular subjects within or even beyond the current KLAs), there will be a significant impetus towards the establishment and use of professional teaching standards in Australian school education.

## 2. THE BROADER PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS AGENDAS

Any attempt to articulate and deploy professional standards for accreditation of accomplished classroom teachers needs to be informed by the broader national and international debates on professional teaching standards more generally conceived than those pertaining only to 'accomplished' teachers. One major international survey<sup>1</sup> revealed a range of purposes and uses for professional teaching standards in international practice as follows.

Standards have been used:

- ♦ to recruit candidates into teacher education programs
- ♦ to assess student teachers
- ♦ to accredit teacher education programs
- ♦ in the certification of beginning teachers on completion of probationary requirements/period of induction and/or at the point of initial certification
- ♦ to set out accountability criteria with regard to the role and responsibilities of teachers
- ♦ in the on-going licensing or appraisal of experienced teachers at various stages of their careers
- ♦ to enable the validation and accreditation of accomplished teaching in either voluntary or mandatory ways
- ♦ to assess teachers seeking promotion
- ♦ in the selection and ongoing appraisal of school executives, including Principals
- ♦ to serve as guidelines or goals for teachers' professional growth and development
- ♦ to sharpen the focus of educational systems on quality provision, on accreditation of preservice and professional development teacher education programs, and on promotion criteria
- ♦ to clarify issues of quality assurance in the eyes of the wider community.

Standards have been framed as:

- ♦ entry-level standards - particularly when establishing minimal licensing requirements
- ♦ optimal standards - when setting out expectations of an accomplished teacher

The majority of standards used internationally have relied on implicit assessment through course expectations, employment guidelines, licensing requirements and executive selection procedures. These contrast with the explicit and rigorous external

assessment undertaken in some countries, for example those developed by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in the United States.

## 3. SOME THRESHOLD QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

This Discussion Paper sets out to generate discussion within the broad Australian community in response to a number of questions, including those listed below.

- What constitutes a profession and what does it mean to be a professional?
- Why does the teaching profession need standards of accomplished professional practice?
- Who would benefit from the identification and use of standards of accomplished professional practice?
- Upon what premises and principles ought the construction of standards of accomplished professional practice be based?
- What can we learn from overseas experience?

## 4. WHAT CONSTITUTES A 'PROFESSION' AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A 'PROFESSIONAL'?

Words change their meanings over time, of course. For example, little status is conveyed today by the use of the word "profession" in the phrase "the world's oldest profession". Throughout the 19th century and up until the middle of the 20th century "professional" was of a lower status than "amateur" in the description of any highly skilled English cricketer: right up to, and in some cases beyond, World War II the professionals were not even allowed to share the same dressing rooms as their amateur team mates.

In the 1950s, for example, when Australian amateur tennis players Frank Sedgman and Ken McGregor forfeited their "amateur status" to join Jack Kramer's "professional troupe", the nation grieved at the loss of its Davis Cup heroes. It is a very different world today.

What is a 'profession'? As distinct, say, from a 'trade', a 'craft', an 'occupation', a 'vocation', or an 'organisation'? Or can a 'profession' incorporate some, part, or even all of what is understood by these other terms? Is teaching a profession? Or, as at least one education academic has claimed, is it merely a 'para-profession'? What does it mean to say that teachers are professionals? What is at stake? Status? Merely semantics? Remuneration? Accountability? Credibility? Autonomy? Respect? All of these? Or only some? What else? Do these questions matter?

These questions cannot be assumed to have answers that are uncontested or axiomatic within and beyond the educational community.

But it would be desirable for the profession to move towards some agreement on such fundamental questions for it to proceed with any assurance towards developing professionally and

<sup>1</sup> This section draws heavily on Brock & Mowbray, 1998: 15-36; 50-61.

<sup>2</sup> This section draws heavily on Brock, 2000: 8-11.

publicly coherent, valid, and credible standards of professional practice 'owned' by the profession and acknowledged within the wider society.

Nor are these questions new.

For example, from its inception over half a century ago the Australian College of Education, has wrestled with the issue of teaching as a profession. For example, at the ANZAAS Conference in August 1946 Dr Darling, one of the founders of the College:

delivered a paper by his friend Neil MacNeil, the then recently deceased Principal of Wesley College. There MacNeil lamented the lack of recognition of the teaching profession by the community and proposed that the teaching profession should take the matter into its own hands and be the architect of its own fortunes by establishing a Royal Guild of Teachers which would include all qualified teachers in Australia from both state and private schools and:

should speak with authority in all matters affecting the profession itself, on ethics, etiquette, status of teachers and projected education changes. The Guild should also be a common pool from which qualified teachers might move when necessity requires, from state to state and from church school to high school, and vice-versa

(MacNeil, 1946 cited in Boston, 1999: 5).

But the NSW Director-General, and incoming President of the ACE, Dr Ken Boston has observed that "this (has) proved too demanding an objective" and that the present situation:

falls short of MacNeil's model of an inclusive professional entity, a professional self-regulating body of all teachers, concerned with admission and standards, encompassing the profession as a whole, speaking publicly and authoritatively on the events of the day, and potentially saying who shall, and who shall not be, a teacher.

(Boston, 1999: 5)

Over 30 years ago the great Australian poet A.D. Hope (who passed away earlier this year), founding president of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE), addressed this issue of professionalism at an early national English teachers' conference. He noted that:

even today we lack the main thing that marks out a true professional body... The chief mark of a profession is that it is responsible, and is recognised as responsible, for itself as the body to which the community entrusts its interests in one particular field...

(cf. *English in Australia*, Number 5, August 1967, cited in Gill and Doecke, 1999: 2)

Professor Hope looked forward to one day in the future when

the control and disciplinary power over qualifications and membership of the profession is in the hands of the profession itself

(cf. *English in Australia*, Number 5, August 1967, cited in Gill and Doecke, 1999: 2)

In 1973 the Karmel Report, *Schools in Australia*, declared that:

a mark of a highly skilled occupation is that those entering it should have reached a level of preparation in accordance with standards set by the practitioners themselves, and that the continuing development of members should largely be the responsibility of

the profession. In such circumstances the occupational group itself becomes the point of reference for standards and thus the source of prestige or of condemnation.

(cited in Ingvarson 1998: 3)

But, over a quarter of a century later, Lawrence Ingvarson was accurately able to observe that the teaching profession in Australia "has yet to build its own infrastructure for defining high quality teaching standards" (Ingvarson 1998:3). It still has not fulfilled the aspirations of MacNeil, Hope, Karmel and many other Australians who have insisted on the imperative for the profession to identify its teaching standards.

#### 4.1 What is a "Profession"? -- A Range of Views

Roscoe Pound argues that the word "profession"

refers to a group... pursuing a learned art as a common calling in the spirit of public service - no less a public service because it may incidentally be a means to livelihood. Pursuit of the learned art in the spirit of public service is the primary purpose.

(American Bar Association, 1986: 10)

According to the Australian Council of Professions, professional practitioners, as distinct from "more commercially minded occupational associations"

must at all times place the responsibility for the welfare, health and safety of the community before their responsibility to the profession, to sectional or private interests, or to other members of the profession.

(Australian Council of Professions, 1993: 1)

In arriving at any valid concept of what constitutes a profession, it is necessary to explore the relationships that exist between members of that profession and the wider community. The noted Australian ethicist, Dr Simon Longstaff, rightly points out that:

If the idea of a profession is to have any significance, then it must hinge on this notion that professionals make a bargain with society in which they promise conscientiously to serve the public interest - even if to do so may, at times, be at their own expense. In return, society allocates certain privileges. These might include one or more of the following:

- ♦ The right to engage in self regulation
- ♦ The exclusive right to perform particular functions
- ♦ Special status

(Longstaff, in Fisher, 1996: 109)

But, as Longstaff also reminds us:

At all times it should be remembered that what society gives, it can take away. It only accords privileges on the condition that members of the profession work to improve the common good.

(Longstaff, in Fisher, 1996: 109)

In the introduction to their book *Ethics & the Legal Profession*, Davis and Elliston insist that:

One of the tasks of the professional is to seek the social good. It follows from this that one cannot be a professional unless one has some sense of what the social good is. Accordingly, one's very status as a professional requires that one possess this moral truth. But it requires more, for each profession seeks the social good in a different form, according to its particular expertise: doctors seek it

*"... professionals make a bargain with society in which they promise conscientiously to serve the public interest - even if to do so may, at times, be at their own expense."*

in the form of health; engineers in the form of safe efficient buildings; and lawyers seek it in the form of justice. Each profession must seek its own form of the social good. Without such knowledge professionals cannot perform their social roles.

(Davis and Elliston, 1986: 18)

In the light of this important observation, here is a recent attempt to describe the form of essential "social good" sought by the teaching profession.

Through addressing the needs, taking account of the interests, and challenging the capacities, of each individual student - the essential "social good" pursued by the profession of teaching is to maximise the learning opportunities to help enable each individual student to achieve personal excellence in the intellectual, personal, social, cultural, emotional, physical, moral, spiritual and other aspects of human development.

(Brock, 1999: 16)

Or to put it more simply, teaching can be said to be the "knowing and caring" profession (OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1994: 36).

## 4.2 Differences and similarities between and among professions

Of course there are ways in which the profession of teaching differs from other professions. But the use of the term 'profession' - while pointing to some commonality with regard to such matters as tertiary qualifications, ethical standards, pursuit of a social good, public accountability, and degrees of self-regulation - does not imply bland homogeneity.

For example, clients can select their architects, their dentists, their doctors (up to a point, depending on medical insurance), and their lawyers (again, up to a point, depending on matters of expense). School students usually cannot select their teachers. Nor, normally, do teachers select their students: except in the broader systemic sense where private schools can select their students. And barristers have codes of ethics that restrict their capacity to 'pick and choose' from a queue of potential clients: although public school teachers have even fewer 'pick and choose' options. Being involved in the education of children and young people and engaged in the challenging task of inculcating values, teachers have a particularly serious responsibility to abide by ethical standards appropriate to their profession (see Lovat, 1998 and Brock, 1999).

Clearly, most professionals have greater autonomy in selecting where, how, and when they will work than school teachers have. But while teachers do not have the income-earning capacity of most professions (the clergy being a notable exception), they do enjoy certain conditions of employment that are not enjoyed by other professions.

A profession's knowledge base, worked out through time and understood or accepted by the community, is part of what defines a profession and contributes to the community's assuredness of the profession's usefulness to society. What, then, is the knowledge base of teaching?

The 1998 report of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Preparing a Profession*, insists that the best way to describe the distinctive knowledge that ought to underpin teachers' work is what it calls 'pedagogical content knowledge'. Teachers

should have the deep understanding of content and pedagogy which enables them to transform (organise, adapt, present) content in ways which are powerfully responsive to the particular characteristics of learners, curricula and teaching environments. They need to have such 'pedagogical content knowledge' thoroughly integrated with their other knowledge and capabilities.

(Australian Council of Deans of Education, 1998: 12)

There are other professions that are subjected to more powerful and explicit 'performance outcomes' accountability procedures than normally apply to the teaching profession. On the other hand, most professions can choose their hours of operation and operate on a one-to-one basis with clients: teaching hours are more constrained and teachers typically operate within clusters of groupings of up to 30 students at a time. But how many other professions are rigorous enough to be explicit about defining standards of accomplished performance as distinct, say, from imposing stringent 'gatekeeping' entry standards or requiring 'average' competence for the maintenance of standards?

## 5. WHY DOES THE TEACHING PROFESSION NEED STANDARDS OF ACCOMPLISHED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE?

In "The image of teachers and teaching", a paper incorporated within *Raising the Standing of Teachers and Teaching*, Eltis and Crump assert that:

the hallmark of a profession is that those belonging to it establish high standards, set stringent criteria for those seeking to enter, ensure that those standards continue to be met, while taking steps to ensure new criteria are devised so that members of the profession are not allowed to stagnate. Could we apply these criteria to teaching? We have a long way to go if we are going to have a teaching profession which itself accepts a need to set and monitor high quality standards and convince the public of the success the profession is having in meeting such standards.

The Schools Council (1990) presented a sample Charter for Teaching... while Beare (1992) offered eight characteristics common to most professions:

1. An esoteric (*sic*) service;
2. Preservice study;
3. Registration and regulation by the profession itself;
4. Peer appraisal and review;
5. Professional code of conduct;
6. Earned status;
7. The ideal of public service;
8. Client concern.

If we think of teaching we might be inclined to argue that certain of these criteria match up well but for others there is a huge gap. We may not agree on the distribution of these criteria in an individual assessment of teaching as a profession.

(NSW Ministerial Advisory Council on the Quality of Teaching, 1997: 22-23)

*"The way in which other professions practise self-regulation and require assessment to ensure accreditation is taken as the model for establishing and enhancing the professionalism of teachers of mathematics."*

The Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers  
www.aamt.edu.au

Professor Peter Karmel, author of probably the most influential report on Australian school education in the last half-century - *Schools in Australia* - was recently asked "what his focus would be if he were to produce another report today". Unequivocally, Karmel replied: "raise the status of teaching to make it an attractive career, and raise the quality of the teaching body" (cited in Bagnall, 2000: 43).

But as Dr Ken Boston reminded the members the Australian College of Education last year, what is at stake is much more than issues merely of 'status'. The profession must discontinue being:

distracted from the main game of teacher professionalism which is about the development and maintenance of a critical mass of excellent practitioners with knowledge about their practice, and about the monitoring of that knowledge and practice through standards.

(Boston, 1999: 7-8)

## 6. WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE IDENTIFICATION AND USE OF STANDARDS OF ACCOMPLISHED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE?

The *positive* purposes for establishing and deploying standards of professional practice for accomplished classroom teachers could be summarised as follows.

For *members of the profession themselves*: making professional standards for accomplished classroom teaching explicit would provide teachers with a clearer personal and collective sense of their own worth, of their professional development needs, as well as greater community recognition and valuing of the intellectual, social and cultural complexity of accomplished classroom teachers' work.

For example, in its brochure advertising its ARC-SPIRT project, the Australian Science Teachers' Association lists the following advantages for Science teachers in developing explicit standards of accomplished teaching:

- ◆ To recognise excellent teachers of science
- ◆ To guide professional development, especially in the long term
- ◆ To improve teaching and learning in our schools
- ◆ To enhance teacher accountability and improve the status of teaching
- ◆ To develop a structure which could be used to provide career paths for teachers who remain in the classroom
- ◆ To provide a basis for improving pay structures for classroom teachers
- ◆ To provide national recognition which may be useful at the international level for teacher exchanges or employment overseas.

(Australian Science Teachers Association, 2000: 1)

For *school systems*: professional standards for accomplished classroom teaching would provide a high-water benchmark for recruitment, selection, accreditation, professional development, promotion, and support for procedures for improving the quality of teachers who do not manifest accomplished standards.

For *school students*: provided that, in addition to the inherent professional satisfaction to be derived from being so acknowledged, there were sufficient incentives for teachers who could demonstrate that they are or have become 'accomplished', the quality of students' education would be significantly enhanced by an emphasis on accomplished standards of teaching, focusing on knowledge, understanding, skills, and professional values.

For *teacher educators*: professional standards of accomplishment for classroom teaching would provide clearer guidelines for the development of best-practice preservice and postgraduate professional development programs.

For *those thinking about becoming teachers*: professional standards for accomplished classroom teaching would provide authentic expectations of the calibre of professionalism evinced by the finest teachers.

For the *community*: professional standards for accomplished classroom teaching would provide clear parameters of excellence in the quality of teachers in schools and strengthen their endeavours to ensure that there is a constant pressure on school systems and individual teachers to aspire for accomplished status.

There is also a legitimately *defensive* purpose for establishing appropriately rigorous standards of accomplished practice in the teaching profession.

Adele Horin is one of those informed journalists who, over the years, has been a consistently staunch champion of those in our society who are committed to the advancement of the public good. So her quite seminal and controversial, article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on Saturday, May 6, 2000, warrants serious attention when contemplating the need for professional standards in the teaching profession.

There is no lack of potential heroes among the crop of young people entering teacher training, I am told. Alarming reports of low TERs to the contrary, these aspiring teachers are intellectually curious, flexible, caring. They have turned their backs on more lucrative jobs as screen jockeys or computer programmers for the theatre of the classroom. But given the state of the profession, it will be a miracle if their dynamism and idealism survive.

They have entered a profession caught in a time warp. And it is time for the profession to regenerate itself. As things stand, it is highly unlikely teachers will ever have to attend a job interview for a permanent position. It is highly unlikely they will ever have to present their curriculum vitae to a potential boss - public school principals, in the main, have no input or say on hiring decisions. They will not be required to undertake professional development (though many do). As they climb the pay scale, they will never confront a formal performance evaluation. Nothing has replaced the old system of inspectors who stood in the back of the classroom and checked on teacher quality.

Simply by getting older, teachers will get a \$20,000 salary rise over 13 years, even if they are incompetent. And if they are good, they will never get a cent more than the lazybones up the corridor. Their pay will be mediocre but that is the usual trade-off for outstanding job security. They will never be sacked unless their incompetence or abusive behaviour is truly gross.

(Horin, 2000: 49)

*"They have entered a profession caught in a time warp. And it is time for the profession to regenerate itself."*



## 7. HOW HAVE SOME OTHER COUNTRIES ADDRESSED THE ISSUE OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS?<sup>1</sup>

Much of the United States thrust towards establishing professional standards came from strong reaction to what had been called 'the rising tide of mediocrity' within the school teaching profession in that country. In general, one could say that the Canadian, New Zealand and British impetus has come more from pressures of accountability and the ever-present public policy imperative for lifting standards as well as, in Ontario's case, the desire to preserve and enhance a long-established history of teaching as a relatively well paid profession with high academic or professional entry qualifications

### 7.1 United States of America – National Board of Professional Teaching Standards

One particularly interesting example of setting and using accomplished teaching standards is the work of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) - a private corporation in the USA. Immediately it must be said, however, that there are obvious differences between the USA and Australian education contexts. For example, we in Australia do not have a tradition of massive philanthropic financial support and tax breaks for public education channelled through large private corporations. Furthermore, the Board and its agendas are being heavily supported by the US President and the Federal Government. And, clearly, the National Board's accreditation system is aimed at identifying and rewarding the elite of the American teaching profession.

The NBPTS was established in 1987, with the support of state and federal political leaders, teacher unions and associations, employing authorities, and corporate leaders. It was meticulous in taking the time to consult widely in an attempt to get the processes right. Consequently, the first batch of Board certified 'master teachers' were not announced till 1995. By 1998 more than a thousand teachers had gained Board certification. (Ingvarson 1998: 11)

Statements of standards for accomplished teachers are developed by members of the profession and ratified through extensive consultation. The NBPTS approach to standards avoids the trap of developing checklists that atomise teachers' knowledge and skills.

The national subject teaching associations - including, for example, those for English, Mathematics and Music then take these and after their own extensive consultation within their fields, write up subject-specific professional teaching standards within each of the four specific teaching contexts: Early Childhood; Middle Childhood; Early Adolescent; Adolescent and Young Adulthood - and for generalist teachers, or teachers of specialist subject areas.

Teachers volunteer to apply for National Board accreditation: it is not mandatory. Applicants pay a lodgment fee of somewhere between \$2,000 and US\$3,000. They supply a comprehensive

*Statements of standards for accomplished teachers are developed by members of the profession and ratified through extensive consultation.*

portfolio of evidence to support their application. Teachers report that preparation of their portfolios was the most valuable professional development experience that they had ever had (Ingvarson, 1998: 17). Subsequently they are interviewed rigorously by the assessment team (appointed on merit by the NBPTS following tendering processes).

As Ingvarson points out:

NBPTS is the most ambitious attempt by any country so far to establish a national professional body for the advanced certification of teachers...

Steadily increasing numbers of education authorities are accepting Board certification as evidence of professional development and a basis for salary differentials (NBPTS, 1997). Six states and fourteen districts provide salary supplements for Board certification, eleven states recognise Board certification for license renewal and continuing education units, and thirteen states accept it for license portability purposes.

(Ingvarson, 1998: 17).

In the early years post-1995, only one-third of all applicants were successful. By 2000 the success rate for applicants was nearing the 50% mark: those who miss out do not recover their application fee.

Under President Clinton's budget allocation, it is expected that by 2007 there will be at least one NBPTS certified accomplished teacher in every American school.

The NBPTS model may not be perfect nor should it be simplistically welded onto the Australian experience, but as Rod Chadbourne and Claire Brown noted in their review of the NBPTS Standards for Language Arts (English):

Among other things, the NBPTS indicates that teachers can expect professional standards to be valid and powerful; valid in terms of capturing the difference between novice, journeymen and highly accomplished teachers; and, powerful in terms of providing teachers with a basis for ongoing professional development

(Chadbourne and Brown 1998: 22).

The vast panoply of NBPTS standards of accomplished teaching is built on five core, underpinning propositions.

#### The Five Propositions of Accomplished Teaching

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards seeks to identify and recognize teachers who effectively enhance student learning and demonstrate the high level of knowledge, skills, abilities and commitments reflected in the following five core propositions:

##### 1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning

Accomplished teachers are dedicated to making knowledge accessible to all students. They act on the belief that all students can learn. They treat students equitably, recognizing the individual differences that distinguish one student from another and taking account of these differences in their practice. They adjust their practice based on observation and knowledge of their students' interests, abilities, skills, knowledge, family circumstances and peer relationships.

Accomplished teachers understand how students develop and learn. They incorporate the prevailing theories of cognition and

<sup>1</sup> For a fairly comprehensive description of some significant international developments see Brock & Mowbray, 1998: 15-36.

intelligence in their practice. They are aware of the influence of context and culture on behavior. They develop students' cognitive capacity and their respect for learning. Equally important, they foster students' self-esteem, motivation, character, civic responsibility and their respect for individual, cultural, religious and racial differences.

2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

Accomplished teachers have a rich understanding of the subject(s) they teach and appreciate how knowledge in their subject is created, organized, linked to other disciplines and applied to real-world settings. While faithfully representing the collective wisdom of our culture and upholding the value of disciplinary knowledge, they also develop the critical and analytical capacities of their students.

Accomplished teachers command specialized knowledge of how to convey and reveal subject matter to students. They have a 'pedagogical content knowledge' command of a wide repertoire of teaching strategies that enable them to organise, adapt, and present the curriculum in ways that take due account of the specific contents within which they teach and their students learn. They are aware of the preconceptions and background knowledge that students typically bring to each subject and of strategies and instructional materials that can be of assistance. They understand where difficulties are likely to arise and modify their practice accordingly. Their instructional repertoire allows them to create multiple paths to the subjects they teach, and they are adept at teaching students how to pose and solve their own problems.

3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

Accomplished teachers create, enrich, maintain and alter instructional settings to capture and sustain the interest of their students and to make the most effective use of time. They also are adept at engaging students and adults to assist their teaching and at enlisting their colleagues' knowledge and expertise to complement their own.

Accomplished teachers command a range of generic instructional techniques, know when each is appropriate and can implement them as needed. They are as aware of ineffectual or damaging practice as they are devoted to elegant practice.

They know how to engage groups of students to ensure a disciplined learning environment, and how to organize instruction to allow the schools' goals for students to be met. They are adept at setting norms for social interaction among students and between students and teachers. They understand how to motivate students to learn and how to maintain their interest even in the face of temporary failure.

Accomplished teachers can assess the progress of individual students as well as that of the class as a whole. They employ multiple methods for measuring student growth and understanding and can clearly explain student performance to parents.

4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.

Accomplished teachers are models of educated persons, exemplifying the virtues they seek to inspire in students – curiosity, tolerance, honesty, fairness, respect for diversity and appreciation of cultural differences – and the capacities that are prerequisites for intellectual growth: the ability to reason and take multiple perspectives to be creative and take risks, and to adopt an experimental and problem-solving orientation.

Accomplished teachers draw on their knowledge of human development, subject matter and instruction, and their understanding of their students to make principled judgments about sound practice. Their decisions are not only grounded in the literature, but also in their experience. They engage in lifelong learning which they seek to encourage in their students.

Striving to strengthen their teaching, accomplished teachers critically examine their practice, seek to expand their repertoire, deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment and adapt their teaching to new findings, ideas and theories.

5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

Accomplished teachers contribute to the effectiveness of the school by working collaboratively with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum development and staff development. They can evaluate school progress and the allocation of school resources in light of their understanding of state and local educational objectives. They are knowledgeable about specialized school and community resources that can be engaged for their students' benefit, and are skilled at employing such resources as needed.

Accomplished teachers find ways to work collaboratively and creatively with parents, engaging them productively in the work of the school.

National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, 1999, (<http://www.nbpts.org/nbpts/standards/five-props.html>)

This constitutes a most impressively comprehensive foundation. The standards arising from the five core propositions are descriptive rather than prescriptive. They are expressed in prose, not in 'check list' format.

## 7.2 Canada – Ontario College of Teachers Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

The development of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* by the Ontario College of Teachers, a self-regulatory body for the teaching profession in Ontario, led to the articulation of characteristics very similar to those described by the NBPTS' five propositions outlined above. Intensive and extensive consultation within the profession was a hallmark of their development. The document was approved by the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers on November 19, 1999.

*"Accomplished teachers have a rich understanding of the subject(s) they teach and appreciate how knowledge in their subject is created, organized, linked to other disciplines and applied to real-world settings."*

The standards of practice were developed to answer the question "What does it mean to be a teacher?" "Standards of practice" were the descriptors used to answer that question. Thus, the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* includes statements about students and student learning, professional knowledge, teaching practice, leadership and community, and ongoing professional learning.

The standards of practice are descriptors for the teaching profession. They will also serve as a catalyst for discussion, debate and movement toward a consensus about what it means to be a teacher.

Ontario College of Teachers, 1999, ([http://www.oct.on.ca/english/professional\\_affairs/standards.htm](http://www.oct.on.ca/english/professional_affairs/standards.htm))

The Ontario College's standards of practice for the teaching profession sit within five interdependent categories.

### Commitment to Students and Student Learning

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers demonstrate care for and commitment to students. They are dedicated in their efforts to teach and to support student learning. They treat students equitably and with respect. They encourage students to grow as individuals and as contributing members of society. Members of the Ontario College of Teachers assist students to become life-long learners.

### Professional Knowledge

Professional knowledge is the foundation of teaching practice. Members of the Ontario College of Teachers know the curriculum, the subject matter, the student, and teaching practice. They know education-related legislation, methods of communication, and ways to teach in a changing world.

### Teaching Practice

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers apply professional knowledge and understanding of the student, curriculum, teaching, and the changing context of the learning environment to promote student learning. They conduct ongoing assessment and evaluation of student progress. They modify and refine teaching practice through continuous reflection.

### Leadership and Community

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers are educational leaders who create and sustain learning communities in their classrooms, in their schools, and in their profession. They collaborate with their colleagues and other professionals, with parents, and with other members of the community to enhance school programs and student learning.

### Ongoing Professional Learning

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers are learners who acknowledge the interdependence of teacher learning and student learning. They engage in a continuum of professional growth to improve their practice.

Ontario College of Teachers, 1999, ([http://www.oct.on.ca/english/professional\\_affairs/standards.htm](http://www.oct.on.ca/english/professional_affairs/standards.htm))

## 7.3 OECD Research Findings<sup>4</sup>

The OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation report, *Quality in Teaching*, based its investigation of developments in eleven member nations (Austria, Australia, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States) on the following aspects of teacher quality:

- ◆ Knowledge of substantive curriculum areas and content
- ◆ Pedagogic skill, including the acquisition of knowledge and ability to use a repertoire of teaching strategies
- ◆ Reflection and the ability to be self critical, the hall-mark of teacher professionalism
- ◆ Empathy and the commitment to the acknowledgement of the dignity of others
- ◆ Managerial competence, as teachers assume a range of managerial responsibilities within and outside the classroom.

Subsequent to mapping developments in participating countries against these aspects of teacher quality, the OECD noted two things:

- ◆ 'teacher commitment' is the quality that makes all other qualities possible
- ◆ collegiality and collaborative activity has been identified in a number of areas as an element of quality teachers' work.

Consequently the OECD identified the following as characteristic of high quality teachers.

### High quality teachers:

- ◆ demonstrate commitment
- ◆ have subject specific knowledge and know their craft
- ◆ love children
- ◆ set an example of moral conduct
- ◆ manage groups effectively
- ◆ incorporate new technology
- ◆ master multiple models of teaching and learning
- ◆ adjust and improvise their practice
- ◆ know their students as individuals
- ◆ exchange ideas with other teachers
- ◆ reflect on their practice
- ◆ collaborate with other teachers
- ◆ advance the profession of teaching
- ◆ contribute to society at large.

After its comprehensive examination of the many agendas associated with professional teaching standards in *Quality in Teaching*, the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation came up with a succinct and accurate description of teaching as a "knowing and caring" profession (OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1994: 36).

## 8. UPON WHAT PREMISES AND PRINCIPLES OUGHT THE IDENTIFICATION AND USE OF STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FOR ACCOMPLISHED TEACHING IN AUSTRALIAN CLASSROOMS BE BASED?

While it is extremely important to be aware of how other countries may have identified, or are attempting to identify, the knowledge, skills, understanding and professional values that characterise the professional standards demonstrated by accomplished teachers - we in Australia must not merely 'apply' somebody else's 'model'.

But having said that, taken collectively the NBPTS, the Ontario College and the OECD provide a most impressive array of descriptors for accomplished teaching.

This Discussion Paper proposes that there are a number of interdependent principles or premises upon which the identification and use of standards of accomplished professional practice should be based.

### 8.1 The identification of any professional teaching standards should involve full discussion with, and ultimately 'ownership' of such standards by, the teaching profession as a whole.

A commitment to establishing standards for accomplished teaching means having to consider the many subjects/curriculum areas and the wide spectrum of teaching/learning contexts from pre-school and early childhood contexts, to primary, to 'middle schooling', to junior secondary, to senior secondary/college, and other teaching/learning contexts.

*"... effective schools are only 'effective' to the extent that they have 'effective' teachers."*

<sup>4</sup> This section is taken from Brock & Mowbray, 1998: 35-36.

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Any such commitment that did not involve proper consultation with and processes to facilitate ownership by the teaching profession as a whole - involving grass roots participation of classroom teachers, those in school executive leadership positions, Principals, administrators, teacher educators, associations such as unions, subject/curriculum and teacher professional bodies, and those representing various sectors (eg primary, middle-school, and secondary Principals' associations) - would lack credibility.

Indeed, any articulation of standards that did not take account of the 'lore' of the profession as a whole, its history, values and culture, would provide little more than rhetoric and would have no perceptible impact on practice.

Teachers have often been pretty good at recognising who are the accomplished practitioners within their profession.

The power of narrative in recounting and sharing stories of exemplary teachers of the past and the present should never be underestimated or ignored. The ARC-SPIRT project on English/Literacy standards has drawn heavily on this methodology.

The teachers' accounts of their teaching are far more than a source of information about their work. They are occasions where these teachers come together, outside school time, to talk about their professional lives. Yet such phrasing - that they come together to talk "about" their professional lives - does not capture the quality of their involvement. Their talk and their writing are a form of knowledge construction (Barnes and Todd, 1977; Mercer, 1996; Mishler, 1991), not simply talk 'about' what they know and do (as though the knowing and doing can simply be posited as existing out there, for all to see), but a significant enactment of that knowing and doing.

(Gill and Doecke, 1999: 5)

But the processes of professional empowerment are not without their difficulties. For example, two recent articles in the online American journal *Education Week on the Web* graphically illustrate the two sides of the empowering of teachers coin. On the one hand, the rather disturbing "When I Grow Up, I Don't Think I Want to Be a Teacher" (Evans, 1999: 44 - 230) hammered home the damage done when teachers no longer feel they can exercise professional autonomy in educational provision.

But on the other hand, another equally disturbing article "The Chronic Failure of Curriculum Reform" (Labaree, 1999: 42 - 44), argued that so much damage to American school education has been done by some teachers exercising their autonomy to undermine genuine curriculum reform and to replicate discredited theory and practice in classrooms.

### **8.2 Accomplished teachers make a difference.**

Accomplished teachers inspire their students to learn. Establishing teacher-student relationships built on trust, honesty, empathy, and authenticity are among the distinguishing hallmarks of accomplished teaching. They can, and do, make a significant improvement in the quality of a student's life both within and beyond the confines of the school.

There has been much discussion in recent years as to what constitutes a good school education - such as the question of what value a school adds to the knowledge, skills, understandings attitudes, and values with which the student enters that particular school.

But as Ingvarson rightly insists:

good teachers make good schools, much more than the reverse. Their accumulated knowledge and skills form the principal asset in any school or education system. The research program of Smith-Rowe, Holmes, & Hill (1993), for example, shows that teacher effects far outweigh school effects on student achievement: it is essentially through the quality of teaching that effective schools 'make a difference'; in fact, on the basis of our findings to date it could be argued that effective schools are only 'effective' to the extent that they have 'effective' teachers.

(Ingvarson, 1998: 20-21)

The three year longitudinal study of schools in Victoria, referred to by Ingvarson, sought to identify the characteristics of effective schools to support a developmental model of teacher and school effectiveness. It concluded that teacher effectiveness is the key to improved educational outcomes (Hill, Rowe, & Holmes - Smith, 1993).

There is no doubt that the socio-economic and cultural contexts within which a school is physically located play key roles in addressing such questions. But accomplished teachers seek to transcend rather than passively to accept any factors of socio-economic disadvantage that so often inhibit the educational opportunities of some students.

For example, Olson and Hendrie cite comments made about one Principal of an American school in a seriously socio-economically disadvantaged area that was outstanding in 'turning around' the educational outcomes of its students: "she never lowers her standards.... Ms Hedgemon's primary standard is that all students are expected to succeed. Teachers are not to make excuses for them because they are disadvantaged - a policy that researchers say is the core philosophy of every successful high-poverty school." (Olson and Hendrie: 1998: 2)

### **8.3 Any attempt to establish professional standards for accomplished teachers must be firmly grounded in an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the complex nature of teachers' work.**

UNESCO's recent comprehensive manifesto on the future of education in a global sense, *Learning: The Treasure Within*, identified four 'pillars' of learning: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together, and Learning to Be (Delors 1996: 97). But for millions of people in our world, in so called 'developed' as well as in developing nations, however, there is a fifth pillar - Learning to Survive: in all of the physical, social, economic, cultural, spiritual, psychological and other dimensions of that word. All five pillars have to be taken into account when considering the profession of teaching in Australia.



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The "Rationale" of the current ARC-SPIRT Science project being undertaken by the Australian Science Teachers Association captures some of these issues succinctly and powerfully:

Professional standards recognise the complex and skilled work of teachers of science. They will therefore raise the status of teachers and improve their career paths. By declaring publicly the attributes of highly accomplished teachers of science, the standards will guide long term professional development and hence raise the quality of teaching and learning in science.

(Australian Science Teachers' Association, 1999: 1)

In their recent study of occupational satisfaction, motivation and mental health of 2,000 teachers and school executives in Australia, England and New Zealand, Associate Professor Steven Dinham and Dr Catherine Scott of UWS Nepean, concluded that there was a need to re-focus attention on the 'core business' of teaching: which is facilitating student learning.

Dinham and Scott acknowledge that there are some things that have not changed about the typical classroom and the work of teachers over the past century.

What has changed, however, are the expectations, responsibilities and pressures on teachers and schools. There are three strands to these increased expectations and responsibilities: academic, in that there are far more subjects and 'perspectives' that need to be squeezed in a largely unchanged school day resulting in an 'overcrowded' curriculum; social expectations, whereby schools and teachers are charged with addressing and solving a widening array of social problems which society seems unwilling or incapable of dealing with; and greater administrative responsibilities placed on schools in recent times as educational bureaucracies have been pruned and greater responsibility has been shifted to schools ...

(Dinham and Scott, 1998: 3)

The Australian College of Education's *Innovative Teaching Project* (ITP) recognises the evolving nature of teachers' work but notes that "relatively little is known about new and emerging strategies that are being used by teachers as a means of responding creatively to major economic, social and technological (as well as educational changes" (Cumming, 2000: 1).

Consideration of professional teaching standards cannot be undertaken without having regard to the rights and responsibilities of teacher employers. As the ARC-SPIRT project on accomplished standards for English/Literacy teaching has insisted:

Professional teaching standards cannot be formulated apart from the institutional contexts in which teachers live and work and which shape their professional lives and their sense of what is possible. Standards cannot be miraculously handed down to either the professional associations or to future certifying authorities as complete in themselves. Standards statements can be achieved only by acknowledging the ways in which external bodies already define the nature and scope of teachers' work - as the research of Connell (1985), Hargreaves (1994) and Huberman (1993) remind us.

(Gill and Doecke, 1999: 4)

This Discussion Paper takes the strong view that any subsequent articulation of accomplished teaching standards will have to be described in continuous prose: lists of individual 'behaviourist' or

'check list' outcomes should be avoided as they run the risk of atomising the elements of teachers' work.

#### **8.4 Any construction of professional standards for accomplished teachers should be consistent with the concept of a career-long continuum from probationary teacher to retirement and be applicable to all ranks from beginning teacher onwards.**

Adherence to this principle would help to ensure greater coherence and continuity of professional expectations within and across the spectrum of the teaching career. A corollary of this, of course, would be the need for periodical review of the standards to ensure their ongoing validity and relevance.

#### **8.5 The articulation of, and commitment to, professional teaching standards must be flexible enough to enable, indeed celebrate, that quality of individuality which is a hallmark of being a professional.**

In the language of Gerard Manley Hopkins' lovely little poem, "Pied Beauty", we should always rejoice in the dappledness of the teaching profession and never seek to reduce its couple-colouredness to a dull grey conformity. Most in the teaching profession have worked with or have known real, individualist 'characters' who were accomplished teachers. We must always celebrate the rich and diverse ways in which identifiable professional teaching standards are individually manifested by effective school teachers in their own individual ways.

Every action undertaken by a teacher constitutes an implicit or explicit manifestation of human values. Put another way, it is through our behaviour that we give expression to our professional values: to our very being.

As Hopkins put it in another poem "As kingfishers catch fire":

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:  
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;  
Selves - goes itself: myself, it speaks and spells,  
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*  
I say more: the just man justifies;  
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;

Teachers teach according to their 'being': *who* teachers are is absolutely the foundation of *how* they teach.

### **9. WHAT SHOULD THE ACCOMPLISHED AUSTRALIAN CLASSROOM TEACHER KNOW, UNDERSTAND, DO, AND VALUE?**

Obviously, any specification of accomplished standards for Australian classroom teachers would have to be framed inclusively according to the areas of knowledge, skills, understanding and professional values needed to undertake successfully the complex role of a teacher in the diverse array of subject and teaching contexts within which teachers now operate within and across a diversity of contexts in this country.

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In addition to the most recent ACE/ACSA/AARE Conference there have been in recent years significant international seminars and conferences in Fremantle, Melbourne and Brisbane that have been exclusively devoted to professional teaching standards agendas. There also have been, and there continue to be, rich Australian contributions to research, scholarship and practice in the development of professional teaching standards.

**What are the kinds of professional knowledge, understanding, skills and values that ought to characterise accomplished school teaching in Australian schools?**

What follows is the Discussion Paper's tentative attempt, through a critiqued distilling of the outcomes of these recent international and national developments as well as the examples described earlier, to stimulate national discussion by proposing some answers to this fundamental question which was posed at the outset.

The qualities proposed below should be seen as inter-dependent: not reducible to a lock-step 'tick-a-box' set of reductionist or decontextualised 'competencies'; not comparatively 'weighted' between or among the various characteristics of accomplishment; and not listed in any necessary order of precedence.

**It has been suggested that accomplished classroom teachers in Australia demonstrate their professionalism by:**

- ◆ having a broad, deep, and critically aware **knowledge understanding of and enthusiasm for the intellectual content, discourses, and values** associated with disciplines from which the subjects (or curriculum areas) they teach are derived and as **appropriate to the specific contexts** within which they teach: by being both transmitters and critical interpreters of the knowledge, understanding, skills, and values associated with their subject areas; by recognising that knowledge is often contestable; and by developing programs that fully implement the aims and objectives of the relevant school curriculum
- ◆ **enjoying teaching students** and by holding the **highest expectations** of what each student is capable of achieving: being aware of the individual needs, interests, capacities of their students; and challenging their students accordingly by inspiring, motivating, correcting, and supporting their students, even in the face of temporary or apparent failure
- ◆ **treating all students honestly, justly and equitably**: recognising and appreciating the range of values held by individuals as well as within families, groups, cultures, and the wider school community; and abiding by all statutory, legal, and ethical obligations incumbent upon them as teachers
- ◆ being able to **empathise** with students
- ◆ having an appropriate **sense of humour**
- ◆ **exemplifying the qualities and values that they seek to inspire in their students**: including authenticity, intellectual curiosity and rigour, tolerance, fairness, ethical behaviour,

common sense, self-confidence, respect for self and others, empathy, compassion, appreciation of diversity, and acknowledgment of cultural differences

- ◆ being **reflective practitioners** who critique the impact of their teaching and professional values upon students, colleagues, and others in the wider learning community: by having a critical awareness of the role played by their own educational, social, cultural, religious, financial and other background experiences; and how these experiences may have helped to shape their own values, their approach to teaching, and their assumptions about education
- ◆ displaying adeptness and discernment in the **creative use and critical evaluation of information technologies** for assisting their own teaching and in advancing the learning of their students
- ◆ **providing regular, accurate feedback to students and monitoring the growth in students' learning**: not only to assist in the assessment of students' growth as a basis for reporting each student's achievements against the required learning outcomes regarding what students know, understand, can do, and value as specified by the formal curriculum; but also as a means of judging the effectiveness of their own teaching
- ◆ demonstrating **excellence in the practical, pragmatic craft of teaching and in managing a learning environment** that is interesting, challenging, purposeful, safe, supportive, positive, and enjoyable: which fosters co-operation and collaboration, independence, responsibility, and creativity
- ◆ exercising **high communication and interpersonal skills**: being exemplary in their own literacy and numeracy practices; and having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills, and professional values to exercise the crucial responsibility that all teachers have as teachers of literacy and numeracy
- ◆ being committed to their own **professional development**: seeking to deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment, expand their teaching repertoire, and to adapt their teaching to educationally sound developments arising from authentic research and scholarship
- ◆ exercising **educational leadership**: working collaboratively with their colleagues to develop instructional and welfare policies, curriculum and staff development; and helping to ensure that the essential goals of the school as a learning community are met
- ◆ taking due account of the educational implications of the **community's cultural diversity**: in particular, by including within the curriculum those indigenous issues and perspectives necessary to help achieve reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians; and by being sensitive and responsive to the educational issues generated by and within Australia's multicultural society within the context of continuing to develop a socially cohesive Australian society.

## 10. CONCLUSION

Members of the teaching profession are inheritors of a long and, in the main, an honourable tradition. Any attempt to identify professional teaching standards for accomplished teachers must not, therefore, pretend that such professionalism is something new to our profession.

Furthermore, it is incumbent upon the profession to safeguard its reputation by rewarding those members who sedulously abide by its professional standards of accomplishment, and by finding ways of encouraging those who do not.

Authentic professional teaching standards of accomplishment must be true to, and celebrate, the understanding of what is meant by the term 'accomplished teacher' that emerges from the collective

wisdom of all educators who have a commitment to education in schools.

A properly conducted process of identifying and applying professional standards for accomplished teaching – *that takes its time to get things right* – will enhance, not detract from, the status of our profession.

Ultimately, the profession ought not merely rely on the actions of any external bodies government or regulations that might be established to oversee or regulate professional behaviour.

The imperative to establish and abide by accomplished teaching standards ought to come from *within* the profession itself.

### SOME DISCUSSION POINTERS

#### Some issues raised by the Discussion Paper

1. What are the most significant issues in this Discussion Paper for you as a member of the teaching profession, or as one with an interest in and/or commitment to the quality of teaching and learning in Australian schools, and how might these be advanced in the most effective ways?
2. What are your views about the descriptors of accomplished teaching suggested in Section 9? How might they apply to teaching within and across all of the diverse range of school teaching and learning contexts including pre-school, primary, middle schooling / junior secondary, senior secondary / college, and the combination of post-compulsory education and training pathways?
3. What are the practical implications of issues raised in this Discussion Paper for strategic / structural issues such as the following: teacher registration and its various forms; certification of teacher-education providers or programs; financial and non-financial incentives for teachers who manifest accomplished standards; processes of assessing teacher performance against standards; and the role of standards of accomplishment in promotion and career paths of teachers?

#### Where to from here?

1. What practical strategies involving teachers, parents, students, employers, government agencies, and all relevant professional and other stakeholder bodies, need to be put in place - and by whom - to ensure an effective and co-ordinated approach to moving forward on professional teaching standards from this point?
2. In particular, what needs to be done to encourage individual teachers and members of the profession as a whole to participate in, and exercise ownership of, the processes of identifying, and monitoring standards of professional practice for accomplished teaching?
3. What *specific* suggestions do you have regarding the conduct of a second national forum in 2001 on professional teaching standards? (e.g. outcomes, processes, dates, program, location, participants, presenters, pre-forum activities...)



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