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## ABSTRACT

Two samples of recipients of teaching awards were surveyed in 2002. The first comprised educators from early childhood, primary, secondary, TAFE, and universities who had received inaugural New South Wales (Australia) Minister for Education and Training and Australian College of Educators Quality Teaching Awards in 2001. The second sample comprised educators from the United States who had received a variety of awards for exemplary teaching, ranging from local to national and from primary to university over several decades. Both samples were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions exploring the personal and professional consequences of receiving a teaching award, views on the selection process and criteria employed, and how others had reacted to their award. Opinions of awards for teaching were also canvassed. The parallel studies revealed both intended and unintended outcomes arising from receipt of an award for exemplary or outstanding teaching practice. The e-mail survey and questions for teaching award recipients are appended. (Contains 9 references.) (SM)

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*'Awards for Teaching Excellence: Intentions and Realities'*

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# *'Awards for Teaching Excellence: Intentions and Realities'*

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## **Abstract**

Two samples of recipients of teaching awards were surveyed in 2002. The first comprised educators from early childhood, primary, secondary, TAFE and universities who had received inaugural NSW Minister for Education and Training and Australian College of Educators Quality Teaching Awards in 2001. The second sample comprised educators from the USA who had received a variety of awards for exemplary teaching, ranging from local to national and from primary to university over several decades.

Both samples were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions exploring the personal and professional consequences of receiving a teaching award, views on the selection process and criteria employed, and how others had reacted to their award. Opinions of awards for teaching generally were also canvassed.

The parallel studies revealed both intended and unintended outcomes arising from receipt of an award for exemplary or outstanding teaching practice.

Findings are reported and discussed and implications are explored.

## **INTRODUCTION**

To some degree, awards for teaching expertise are a sub-set of the broader area of teacher evaluation. Teacher evaluation occurs in both pre-service teacher education and in teaching itself. As Medley and Shannon (1994: 6019) note, put simply, the purposes of teacher evaluation are 'hiring, firing, tenure and promotion'. Implicit in these intended uses of teacher evaluation are enhanced student accomplishment and school improvement through selecting/identifying the 'best' or 'better' teachers. More recently, these purposes have broadened to include matters such as public accountability, school funding and even school survival, all in the context of the increased politicisation of education.

Teacher evaluation requires information on teacher performance, data that are hopefully accurate and relevant, as opposed to more informal global impressions, usually garnered by observation, or the examination in isolation of indicators of student achievement such as performance in standardised tests. The purpose of obtaining this information is to make some form of judgement. Of course, it would be hoped that the teacher evaluation process would also prove developmental to the individual teacher and to his or her students and school, but this is not always the case. Some teacher 'tests' for example, are screening mechanisms for employment and nothing more.

Increasingly, forms of professional teaching standards are utilised in teacher evaluation with the intention to provide the accuracy and relevance mentioned previously, although there is the concern that many of these 'standards' describe and 'measure' what is considered 'competent', as opposed to effective or even exemplary performance. The use of portfolios through which teachers plan and document their professional development has also become much more common over the past decade.

What then of awards for teaching? Awards for teaching fall into two broad groups. The first is where 'blind' nomination occurs with the nominee playing no part in the process, the award often coming as a surprise. The second is where the teacher is either aware of the nomination and/or takes some part in the selection process.

Some of the intended purposes or outcomes of teacher awards evident in many articles on the topic include:

1. To honour and recognise outstanding teachers.
2. To provide role models for the profession and for potential teachers.
3. To 'unearth' 'hidden treasures' who might be little known outside their immediate context.
4. To utilise the expertise of such teachers once identified.
5. To identify characteristics and attributes which could be utilised in teacher education, selection and promotion procedures.
6. To stimulate and recognise risk taking, creativity and innovation.
7. To stimulate self-growth and professional development.
8. To motivate teachers through recognition, rewards and prizes.
9. To facilitate reflection and professional learning.
10. To provide research data for theory building on successful teaching.
11. To provide a focus and priority on teaching, particularly in tertiary settings.
12. To promote excellence in teaching.
13. To promote a particular school or sector.
14. To facilitate enhanced student accomplishment.
15. To facilitate school improvement.
16. To raise the status and standing of teachers.

Menges (in Svinicki & Menges, Eds, 1996: 3-7), in canvassing college awards for teaching, identifies common problems for teaching award programs:

1. Selection procedures and criteria – includes tension between 'secrecy' and 'openness', poorly understood procedures and vague criteria.
2. Bias towards popularity – suspicion that awards favour polished presenters of large classes, particularly when there is student input.
3. Competition versus collaboration – awards to individuals can foster competition
4. Questionable incentives – not future oriented, but celebrate past achievements, too much effort required for insufficient reward, too few awards to motivate staff.
5. Special awards replacing continuing rewards – such as increments, which are worth far more over time

Svinicki and Menges (in Svinicki & Menges, Eds, 1996: 109-113) summarise the characteristics of 'exemplary' programs designed to recognise teaching excellence:

1. The program is consistent with the institution's mission and values, and it communicates those values to the community.
2. The program is grounded in research-based teaching competencies rather than dependent on special interests, favouritism, or popularity.
3. The program recognises all significant facets of instructional activities that are conducted by the faculty.
4. The program rewards collaborative as well as individual achievements.
5. The program neither precludes nor displaces rewards for teaching that are part of the institutionalised reward system.
6. The program calls on those who have been honoured to continue to contribute to the development of others.
7. The program contributes to collegial responsibility for promoting exemplary teaching.
8. The program encourages self-reflection at all levels of the institution.
9. The program is based on sound assessment practices, including multiple data sources, multiple measures, and consistency over time.
10. The program itself is open to scrutiny and change as conditions change.

Svinicki and Menges conclude by stating (113):

Teaching is a difficult and honourable calling and deserves to be recognised as such. This is the time to bring teaching out of the closet, not in order to condemn those who do poorly, but to honour those who add lustre to the calling.

Various studies have confirmed teachers' need for genuine recognition, and how powerfully they respond to it (see Dinham, 1992; Dinham, 2000; Dinham & Scott, 2000). Unfortunately, the same studies have also highlighted opposition to teaching awards from teachers themselves and principals. Often, awards – and this was certainly the case with the Quality Teaching Awards in NSW in the initial stages – are portrayed as divisive, manipulative, demeaning and likely to lead to the 'poaching' of successful teachers by better resourced schools and systems. Unfortunately, when teacher status and morale are low, attempts to recognise teachers can be viewed cynically by those they are designed to reward and showcase.

## **THE NSW QUALITY TEACHING AWARDS**

### Background

In July 2000 at an ACE international conference, the then NSW Minister for Education and Training, John Aquilina, announced that he would make funding available to the NSW Chapter 'to recognise and applaud the best teachers in our schools and learn from them'.

The Chapter's challenge was to devise a rigorous, transparent and authentic process to identify outstanding teachers in NSW from government and non-government

sectors, from early childhood through to university teaching and to research their practice.

The Chapter established a Steering Committee of College members across the various sectors with responsibility for the development of the Quality Teaching Awards (see Dinham, 2002, for further background)

### Policies and Procedures

The broad phases in the Quality Teaching Awards are nomination, consideration of referees' reports, portfolio assessment, and site visits.

The Steering Committee decided each nominee had to have been teaching for at least three years. Independently employed teachers and those in other settings such as coaching colleges would not be excluded.

In each sector and for each candidate, the focus was to be on teaching. A recognised teaching qualification was not required, although only two of the 57 QTA winners in 2001 lacked a formal teaching qualification. There was also the 'term of reference' to research and report on outstanding teaching.<sup>1</sup>

Awardees receive a testamur, a cheque for \$500 from the QTA sponsor The Daily Telegraph, and a year's free membership of the College for non-members of ACE (or equivalent value in ACE resource material for current members). In this way, the College gained 50 talented new members. Awards were presented at Government House, Sydney, in December 2001 by John Watkins, the then newly appointed Minister for Education and Training.

Criteria were based upon the *Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australia* (Brock, 2000) and were deployed in all stages of the QTA process. A professional learning portfolio built around the criteria was integral to the process.<sup>2</sup>

Given the focus on teaching, and in light of experience with other teaching awards, it was thought vital to observe each candidate teaching in his or her context. Interviews and more informal contact would also occur *in situ* with the candidates, their peers, students and others such as community members.

## THE TWO STUDIES

Preliminary findings of the research aspect of the Quality Teaching Awards were presented in a variety of papers and publications in late 2001-early 2002. It was determined that a follow up survey with the 57 QTA recipients for 2001 should take place approximately six months following presentation of the awards to explore, with the benefit of some hindsight and further experience, the operation and outcomes of

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<sup>1</sup> The QTA for 2002 were presented on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Research will continue with this group and subsequent recipients.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.austcolled.com.au/nsw/](http://www.austcolled.com.au/nsw/) for QTA requirements for 2002.

the awards. To this end, all 57 recipients were written to in early May 2002 (see Appendix 1).

It was also decided to conduct something of a parallel study with a 'reference group' of other teachers who had received some form of award for teaching. Requests for participants were placed on a number of email discussion lists, with the result that 46 teachers, all from the USA, offered to be involved. These people ranged across the various sectors (see Table 1). Each was sent an explanatory email message which included a parallel form of the open-ended questions administered to the QTA recipients (see Appendix 2).

## **THE TWO SAMPLES**

It was possible to contact 56 of the 57 2001 QTA recipients, the exception being one teacher who had left Australia. Of the 56, 29 (52%) returned completed survey forms by the requested date.

Of the 46 teaching awardees from the USA who expressed interest in being involved, 30 (65%) responded by the closing date of May 31<sup>st</sup> 2002.

Table One contains the demographic details for each of the two samples. Women formed approximately three quarters of both samples, and age ranges and length of professional experience were similar, with a slight skew to the lower end in the US sample, reflecting the presence of winners of a number of early career awards, for example 'Teaching Assistant of the year'.

Most US award recipients had also received their award fairly recently (median five to six years ago), perhaps a reflection of the contemporary increase in the number of schemes to recognise fine teaching.

A relatively larger proportion of the US sample were tertiary teachers, a probable result of the method used to recruit participants. This is also reflected in the heavy representation of social scientists in the American sample, most of whom taught in education schools or departments.

Table One: Description of American and QTA Samples

	QTA n=29	USA n=30
<u>Sex (%)</u>		
Male	28	25
Female	72	75
<u>Age (range and median)</u>	33-60, 49	33-50, 43.5
<u>Professional experience range, median</u>	5-32, 19	5-35, 16.5
<u>Sector (%)</u>		
Primary	41	20
Secondary	11	7
Post secondary	37	70
Mixed	11	3
<u>Area of specialty (%)</u>		
Arts/Humanities	23	19
Science, technology	23	8
Social Science	8	69
Mixed	35	4
Vocational	12	-
<u>Years since received (US only), range, median</u>	N/A	0-24, 5-6.
<u>Number of awards (US only)</u>	N/A	
1		60
2		20
3		10
4		3
5		7
<u>Nomination process (US only) (%)</u>	N/A	
'Blind' Nomination only		57
Nomination, plus evidence		27
Self nomination, plus evidence		17
<u>Where evidence required, feelings about process (%)</u>		
Positive	N/A	80
Negative		20
<u>Level of award (US only) (%)</u>	N/A	
Depart/faculty		17
Institution		50
District/region		13
State		10
National		10



## RESULTS

Transcripts of responses to the survey were content analysed and coded. Resulting data were entered using SPSS and subjected to descriptive statistical procedures. In most cases, participants provided more than one point or observation in response to each question. The multiresponse procedure in SPSS was used to calculate the percentage of participants who had given each response on each question, consequently percentages in the following tables sum to more than 100.

As features of the QTA awards process are, in this content, unique, additional analyses were performed on the QTA participants' responses to explore the effects of the process itself.

### Personal Meaning

For the large majority of participants, receiving an award was a pleasant and positive experience (Table Two). Enjoyable aspects included feeling proud and pleased, being recognised, feeling affirmed, and being valued by others such as colleagues and supervisors. Some participants also remarked that the award confirmed their decision to become a teacher or, additionally, gave them something to 'live up to'. For the latter participants, being recognised as exemplary was a motive to continue to reflect upon and improve their professional practice.

Differences between the American and QTA samples on some responses can probably best be explained by the relatively prestigious nature of the NSW award and the presence in the US sample of a considerable number of institutional (e.g., 'building') or departmental level awards won by relatively junior members of the profession.

Only one person (US) noted that the award did not mean a great deal to him/her, as personal estimates of the worth of his/her teaching were more important than external recognition.

Table Two: Personal Meaning of Receiving a Teaching Award

<b>Response</b>	<b>%age US Sample</b>	<b>%age QTA Recipients</b>
Recognition of one's value/effort	83	76
Pleased, proud	24	59
Confirmed career choice	21	3
Gave something to live up to	10	14
Confirmation of competence/effectiveness	10	14
A chance to 'share the glory' (with other teachers)	3	3
New contacts following award	3	3
Reflection valuable	1	14
Meant little	2	-

## Professional Meaning

Again, most professional effects of the awards were overwhelmingly positive (Table Three). Some participants found that their award(s) helped their career progression, and gave them confidence to seek new jobs or promotions, as well as helping them to secure these. A number of professional benefits mentioned could be summed up as aiding or resulting in greater involvement in the profession, including the opportunity to meet and/or be sought out by other teachers, educational administrators or policy makers.

Award recipients frequently discovered that they and their ideas were ‘in demand’, following the publicity associated with their award. An award gave them credibility as a spokesperson for the profession and/or as a provider of expert opinion or advice and useful resources. Being in demand could also include invitations to join prestigious committees or to testify before commissions of enquiry.

These benefits were more likely the ‘higher’ the award, that is, state or national awards rather than local ‘prizes’. Those who discerned little or no effect from their award(s) were most likely to be recent recipients and/or have received a school or department level prize.

Negative effects were in the minority, and largely the preserve of university teachers who remarked that it is considered a ‘black mark’ to be recognised as a good teacher in a culture that values research more highly.

Table Three: Professional Meaning of Receipt of an Award

<b>Response</b>	<b>%age US Sample</b>	<b>%age QTA Recipients</b>
Increased interaction with colleagues/the profession	17	36
Encouraged others to use one’s materials, programs, etc.	3	14
Bestowed credibility	35	18
Encouraged commitment, to career, to own practice	14	36
Helped career/advancement	41	14
None, or hard to discern	35	14
Negative effects	7	4
Other	3	39

## Others’ Reaction to the Award

Most reactions from others to the award were positive (Table Four) – congratulations, pride on the person’s behalf and recognition of the recipient as truly deserving being common. However, these reactions were also mixed. Most recipients reported that one or more groups – students, colleagues, supervisors, parents – were pleased and

congratulatory while other groups or persons were uninterested or unsupportive, and occasionally even jealous and resentful. The jealousy usually came from a single colleague who saw him/herself as better or more deserving. The generally generous response from colleagues was mirrored by recipients who often saw their success as reflecting on and belonging to the ‘whole team’ with whom they taught.

Table Four: Others’ Reactions the Award

<b>Response</b>	<b>%age USA</b>	<b>%age QTA</b>
Praise, congratulations (by some)	90	93
Impresses colleagues in new job	7	-
Credibility, requests to ‘share’	10	3
No recognition, not noticed/mentioned (by some)	13	36
Jealousy, resentment (by some)	27	45

### **Analyses Specific to Quality Teaching Award Recipients**

QTA recipients made a number of observations that were unique or largely confined to this group, these comments seldom appearing in responses from the American participants. These were analysed separately as they have something to add to understanding of the QTA process.

#### Personal Effects

QTA recipients were comparatively more likely to see themselves as representatives of ‘all the good and largely unrecognised teachers’, and no more deserving than many other members of their profession (Table Five). They were also more likely to report that the award increased their professional confidence and encouraged them to take on new challenges. This was often specifically linked to the rigorous nature of the QTA awards process.

Table Five: Personal Effects: QTA-only responses

<u>Response</u>	<b>N</b>
Why me? I am just one of many good teachers	8
Rigour of process gave it more value	4
Award increased my confidence	7
Encouraged me to take on new challenges	2

#### Professional Effects

Again, QTA recipients were also highly likely to feel that the award validated their own approach to teaching or their teaching philosophy or classroom emphasis (Table Six). The inclusion of membership of the Australian College of Educators as part of the award was also specifically mentioned as valuable for the contact of it gave with

other educators and for the useful professional resources and reading matter that were a part of College services to members.

Table Six: Professional Effects

<u>Response</u>	N.
Awards gave affirmation of own approach/philosophy/beliefs	10
Membership of ACE professionally valuable	5

### The QTA Awards Process

Those recipients who commented on the awards process all regarded it as valuable, usually for the opportunity it gave to reflect on their professional development, including the chance to re-visit various career achievements (Table Seven). Being asked, usually for the first time in a long time, to enunciate their educational philosophy 'revealed themselves to themselves', and aided them to learn what they really valued and what 'drove' them as teachers.

Many QTA recipients also made positive observations about the site visit component of the process, observing among other things what a pleasure it was to share their professional practice with other educators, to have the opportunity to discuss their teaching and to obtain feedback and affirmation on their practice.

Table Seven: Comments on the Awards Process

<u>Response</u>	N.
Process rewarding/valuable, esp. reflection	24
Site visits a valuable experience	15

## **DISCUSSION**

The results presented above are now discussed with supporting material drawn from the responses to both the Australian and US surveys.

The framework for discussion is provided by the categories of responses revealed by the content analysis, and by the intended purposes or outcomes of teacher awards outlined on page 2.

### Honour, Recognition and Pride

Recognition of achievement - and resultant positive feelings such as pride and fulfilment - is the most frequently cited intended outcomes of teaching awards, and teachers in the two samples made many references to the importance of recognition (76% QTA, 83% of US sample). In the case of the QTA recipients - possibly because of the recency of the award - feelings of pride were more evident than in the US recipients (59% QTA, 24% US sample).

What was also evident, again in both samples but more commonly in the QTA respondents, was a feeling that recognition rarely and insufficiently occurs in day to day teaching. A caveat running through these responses is that recognition needs to be authentic and warranted if it is to have any value and credibility within the profession. The responses from both samples indicate a need, even hunger, for feedback, recognition and affirmation. In this section, QTA responses are given first, followed by US responses.

Teaching is a very rewarding career that has lots of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. The QTA however provides a very substantial form of recognition to me personally in that my work has been evaluated by extremely capable educators and professionals, who have applied the QTA assessment process to my work, standards and professionalism. (QTA, male, 39, government, behaviour support)

Personally receiving a QTA was a major achievement. It was recognition of an area of my professional life that I value highly, but that has always seemed undervalued by the institution for which I work. Because it was based on a rigorous process, including in-site visits, I felt it was a real recognition of teaching rather than just recognition of the ability to apply for awards! Because it was criteria based rather than purely competitive, I see it as more of a credential than a prize. This enhances its value to me. (QTA, female, 52, university, history/politics).

The Quality Teaching Award has meant a great deal to me personally. I felt that it was recognition for many years of hard work and learning. It affirmed for me that I must be on the right track with my philosophy of teaching ... The Quality Teaching Award allowed recognition from my family and friends. ... It is wonderful to be recognised. Everyone likes praise. (QTA, female, 44, non-government, primary)

A Quality Teaching Award has personally been a fulfilling form of recognition after teaching for a lifetime. Often your effort goes unrecognised and the simple 'Job well done!' accolade is all teachers would ask. ... The fact that there is now an award system to acknowledge commitment and ability is a positive. (QTA, female, 52, government, secondary, English)

Receiving a quality teaching award provided me with the recognition that I was doing a good job as a university teacher educator and a secondary school teacher. It was for my own personal satisfaction and peace of mind. It was a nice pat on the back. (QTA, female, 37, secondary/university science)

Receiving such an award has been a revelation. It has defused feelings of resentment and defeat for the years of effort unacknowledged by any beyond those in your department. It has made me feel valued and has given me a desire to assist with educational initiatives beyond the classroom. (QTA, female, 52, government, secondary, English)

The whole experience was very rewarding culminating in the beautiful Awards Ceremony at Government House. I think it was the only function that I have ever attended that applauded teachers. Standing on the lawn at Government House will be one of those moments that will remain with me as a high point in my life and I appreciate very much those who put the effort in to make it possible. As I said in a previous letter ... 'I could have taught for another twenty years without ever having my teaching validated.' (QTA, female, 42, government, early childhood)

It was gratifying personally to have validation that my performance and efforts to 'go the extra mile' for my students were recognised and appreciated. (US, female, 36, university, adult learning)

I found it very rewarding. I love teaching - I love the content and the interactions with students at all levels. It was very nice to be recognised for something I love and something for which I give so much of my self, time and effort. (US, female, 50, university, mathematics education)

I felt it was a clear indication that my superiors shared my deep interest and concern for our students and that high quality teaching was indeed valued and recognised. (US, female, 42, university, testing)

After teaching for 32 years, it was wonderful to be recognised publicly by a professional organisation I respected. The awards ceremony was a great time to assemble my family to share in a truly happy occasion. (US, female, 56, government, primary, learning disabilities)

Every once in a while, I think back on the honour and the memory helps keep me in the game. (US, female, 50, university, special education)

### Humility – Other Great Teachers 'out there'

This category of response was confined largely to the QTA sample, with almost one third of QTA respondents making a comment about the issue. Because of the currency of the award – only six months since presentation – it was obvious that QTA recipients were still 'working through' their emotions, with initial embarrassment and humility giving way over time to increasing pride. The US sample had a median period since receipt of their award/most recent award of five to six years and had longer to reconcile their feelings about receiving their award(s).

In these comments and those about recognition, it is evident that teachers are not used to receiving authentic, genuine praise and recognition.

Initially I was very overwhelmed and a little ashamed that I had been given the opportunity to receive the accolades of gaining such an award. I felt that there were so many great teachers out there that (sic) deserve such an award. (QTA, female, 43, TAFE and VET)

Receiving this award has been an honour and I am still, at this late stage, trying to come to terms with it all. Sometimes I have to ask myself – why me? Certainly there were others working in my area who have more experience and are more equipped to perform in the role of an arts educator. And yet, I know how hard I have worked also, and how important it is to my self-concept to be recognised in this way. (QTA, male, 43, TAFE, Fine Arts)

I feel humble to have been chosen from amongst my hard working colleagues. Many of them equally deserve this award. At this school, we work together, learn from and support each other and I feel honoured but somewhat unworthy to be

picked out for doing no more than my job. (QTA, female, 48, government, secondary science)

Personally, it was a rewarding experience albeit a humbling one. I sincerely feel I am just doing my job how I feel it should be done and have felt quite embarrassed and unduly singled out. (QTA, female, 34, government, secondary science/VET)

I am extremely honoured to receive the award. Although I received the award I cannot help thinking there are better educators who are more worthy than me. (QTA, male, 42, government, special education)

A roller coaster of emotions. Initially I was thrilled and flattered – then embarrassed – then I started to feel unworthy of the honour ... I am still rather embarrassed about the award. There are so many teachers who deserve recognition – who work just as hard as I do – my husband for one. (QTA, female, 47, government, reading recovery, district office)

Receiving a Quality Teaching Award has provided me with an enormous sense of personal pride. ... When I received the award I felt humbled and even more flattered because I know there are so many teachers who are doing an absolutely fantastic job. The presentation of the awards at Government House was a wonderful experience and will remain as a highlight in my career. (QTA, female, 53, government, primary)

At first I was embarrassed in my school, as I felt it was awkward to reward one teacher and not others. The staff however had a different view. They felt that I had put in the extra hours over many years and that I had pushed that extra edge to achieve a high standard of results. They felt so strongly, that on my return from the award ceremony, they surprised me with a lunch and a gift. It was another moment I shall always remember. (QTA, female, 44, government, primary)

I'm sure others wonder why they don't get recognised. However, I have recommended close colleagues for whom I work also be nominated for the same award. Out of three that have been nominated, one has received it and one we are still waiting to hear. I intend to keep nominating my colleagues for the award - of course I work with a group of amazing people! (US, female, N/A)

### 'Reflected Glory' and Recognition for Others

There was a range of comments concerning the fact that the teaching profession was in need of increased recognition, and that a teaching award provided recognition not just to the individual, but to the faculty, school and profession generally. These comments were frequently linked to the other theme of there being many other fine teachers 'out there' equally worthy of recognition. These responses may also reflect teachers' humility and propensity to deflect praise, a finding of a study of highly successful senior secondary teachers in Australia (Ayres, Dinham & Sawyer, 2000).

The majority of my colleagues have been very warmly enthusiastic and congratulatory with a discernable tendency to bask in reflected glory (and rightly so). In a public system with low morale and heavy competition from the private sector, my award was seen as a triumph for public education and for our school (QTA, female, 48, government secondary, science)



The award has given Special Education and in particular Behaviour some well deserved recognition as valid and important. This credibility is often clouded by strong beliefs, fears and uncertainty. ... Professionally the award has empowered myself and others to feel confident in the work that we do. (QTA, male, 39, government, K-12 behaviour support)

Everyone is proud of me: my family, students, colleagues, the organisation, and the Chinese community. ... My colleagues are extremely happy for me as well as for themselves as they consider QTA a recognition for the work we do. It is a big boost to morale for a small organisation like ours. The organisation (represented by all the people working in it) considers it its achievement in that without the nurturing and opportunities it offered, I would not have developed so far professionally. Two ethnic Chinese newspapers reported on the QTA, angling the story to my being Chinese and honoured among the best teachers in NSW. (QTA, female, 48, government, adult, TESOL)

Receiving this award seemed to validate the magnitude of work and effort that had gone into my teaching. ... What it did not mean was that I was the best teacher in the state or area. It meant that I was a representative of teachers and the profession. I am the recipient of a wealth of sharing from teachers to students to administrators. I feel I'm a culmination of their work and ideas, and to put one's self above others would be dishonest. It offered me the chance to speak positively about the profession I love and encourage young people, or adults, to consider teaching as a profession. (US, female, 50, non-government, primary)

### Affirmation of One's Career and Professional Approach

In analysing responses in this area, a common theme is that teachers infrequently receive feedback on their performance and lack an adequate frame of reference to judge their own worth. A third of QTA respondents made a comment concerning these related issues. Affirmation is seen valuable and necessary for on-going professional growth and personal satisfaction:

It is often hard for the individual teacher to measure the value of their work unless it is critically appraised. Working often outside the mainstream with students who display severe behaviour disorders requires creativity, flexibility and a preparedness to change. This can often feel like quite a risk, stepping outside the educational box. The award provides the encouragement to continue to explore and experiment with new ways and strategies in the support of students with special needs. (QTA, 39, government, K-12 behaviour support)

Effective teaching is such a complex process and in the day-to-day mixture of successful engagement, lessons that did not work, good days, bad days, difficult and inspiring students it is easy to wonder if you are doing the 'right thing' (whatever that is). (QTA, female, 48, government, secondary science)

Receiving a Quality Teaching Award was very gratifying. It was a wonderful experience to have my work validated and acknowledged as being worth of such acknowledgement. (QTA, female, 40, government, primary)



Before winning the award I never really understood how important my teaching role was. At first, I considered myself to be a professional artist who was doing a bit of teaching to supplement my income. Now, through winning the award which required me to reflect deeply on my role as a teacher, and in combination with a newfound quest for learning about adults and how and why they participate in education, I have come to realise that perhaps I might just have a career as an arts educator as *well* as an artist. (QTA, male, 43, government, TAFE, fine Arts)

Personal Meaning: an affirmation of what I believed about my practice, receiving congratulations from my students, further affirming that I was doing a good job, making a difference, (US, unknown, university, teacher education).

Preparing my materials for the awards process meant an opportunity to objectify myself to myself which allowed me to see my teaching work in a distinct light. Prior to the portfolio process I was aware intuitively what I tried to accomplish in my teaching and how I went about it, but representing it for others added a new dimension. Receiving the award had a similar effect. Putting myself out there for others to evaluate left me anxious and apprehensive. Being recognised for excellence in teaching really affirmed my own sense of purpose in the field. (US, female, 33, university, social foundations of education)

I felt validated. I chose to teach school instead of pursuing a career in meteorology, so the award made it clear that I had made the right career choice. Basically, I was really proud of myself. (US, female, 54, government, secondary, various)

It has been quite touching and has helped to renew my spirit with regard to having chosen to emphasise teaching over research. it has affirmed my choice. (US, female, 33, community college, psychology)

### Enhanced Confidence and Risk Taking

Enhanced confidence - even risk taking - resulting from the affirmation and validation mentioned previously, was noted by a range of respondents:

I am willing to take a few more risks now and so far it seems to be paying off. I love the professional growth each of these innovations is giving me. (QTA, female, 42, government, early childhood)

I think perhaps the most significant thing is that it has contributed to my feelings of self worth and that I do have something meaningful to share with my colleagues and students. Most of the time I feel more confident in my role as a teacher and have a sense of knowing that I am able to demonstrate and lead best practice. (QTA, female, 50, TAFE, child studies)

The award has made a positive impact on my career, gaining a lot more confidence in my own ability as a 'true professional' in teaching. (QTA, female, 33, government, primary)

Professionally, the award has boosted confidence in myself that I am a valued member of staff. ... The award has also given me the courage to stand up for what I believe. In terms of the classroom, I have had renewed confidence in my own abilities. (QTA, female, 44, non-government, primary)

Receiving a Quality Teaching Award was a privilege and a honour. I was very proud to receive recognition for doing a job which I really enjoy doing. It has also made me feel more confident in my own classroom teaching methods. (QTA, female, 34, government, primary)

Professionally, the award has increased my awareness of how I operate as a teacher and given me confidence in pursuing my use of student centred learning. As a QTA recipient, I enjoy increased support (and freedom) from the school executive in trialing different approaches to teaching and learning. An example of this is the setting up of learning teams in Years 9 and 10 where three classes (and their teachers) are programming together, timetabled at the same time and working with students interchangeably using a highly student centred approach. I am leading this process in each team and teachers have nominated enthusiastically to be on these teams to enhance their own skills and to increase their enjoyment of their job. (QTA, female, 48, government, secondary, science)

By winning this award, I have been inspired to finish my studies in Adult Education at UNE, and will do so this year. (QTA, male, 43, TAFE, fine arts)

I am more conscious now of my role as mentor and provider of resources and support for the teachers I supervise. It has stimulated me to fit in my professional reading somewhere in my week and I continue looking for new ways to help my students. (QTA, female, 49, government, TAFE, English and Communication)

Firstly I feel highly valued as a member of the teaching profession at a time when teacher morale is considered to be low. I feel even more motivated to continue to improve my teaching skills to ensure I 'work smarter' in order to achieve better results. I feel more confident in my ability to help others, realising that I must really have special skills to share with others. Although risk taking has never particularly been an issue for me, I feel braver and more confident at facing challenges in the future. (QTA, female, 53, government, primary)

After obtaining this award I have become more confident; particularly in the area of public speaking ... I have been asked to speak on quite a few occasions from groups of academics (which once would have terrified me) to large groups of parents. So far they seem happy with the presentations I have made to them. (QTA, female, 43, government, early childhood)

It has heightened my confidence that I am achieving at least some of my life's goals to assist in the education of others (especially young adults) in a way that is valued by my peers. It has confirmed that I made the correct decision to redirect my career back toward educating rather than focusing it on conducting research, as once I had. It probably raised somewhat the respect afforded me by friends and family outside of the academy. It has encouraged me to continue to achieve the level of accomplishment that led to my receipt of the award and probably to be too self-critical when I think that I have fallen short of that in a given class or semester. (US, male, 60, university, economics)

It has made me more confident in my teaching. Also, I find myself wanting to be a better teacher - look for new strategies for presenting material. (US, female, 59, university, human development)

## Something to Live Up To

A finding expressed by respondents to both surveys (10% US, 14% QTA) was that the awardee now had an image or reputation 'to live up to'. This was seen by some as a positive and by others as a negative, as the comments below indicate:

I do feel that there is a certain expectation that I will always perform at a level which reflects my deservedness of such an award. (QTA, female, TAFE, child studies)

It has meant that in other teachers' eyes I have some sort of reputation to live up to which I resent! There have been some feelings I have picked up on from other educators that if I was so good to receive that award I should be excellent at this or that job. (QTA, female, 34, government, secondary science/agriculture)

I have always felt somewhat inadequate as a teacher and receiving the award increased my desire to 'live up' to the award by improving my teaching ... it remains a source of inspiration to live up to my expectations of how people worthy of teaching awards ought to teach. (US, female, 33, university, educational research)

## Increased Visibility and Activity in the Profession

A seemingly unexpected outcome of the rewards process, particularly for QTA recipients, was the opportunity – even obligation - to meet with a much wider circle of educators and to have a greater profile and influence within the profession. There was a common theme in these responses of an award 'opening doors', but at times, also being intrusive:

Professionally I have found that a number of doors have been opened to me since receiving the award. I have been invited to be part of focus groups and committees that I feel are vital components if we in TAFE are to succeed in the ever changing VET sector. I have been promoted to a Head Teacher position which I gained in January of 2002. I think that the award was like the icing on top of the cake. (QTA, female, 43, TAFE/VET, computing/administration)

It has also added to the workload. Participation in interviews or surveys from interested academics (such as yourself), approaches from other local schools to address staff meetings on a range of topics and from the local university campus to talk to their education students have both provided rich opportunities for reflection and discussion but also eaten into the time available. (QTA, female, 48, government secondary, science)

I have been co-opted for the National Board of The Australian College of Educators. This has been a steep learning curve for me and has again encouraged me to continue to 'risk take'. I attended my first meeting in April and enjoyed it. I will be hosting a meeting of teachers in the near future who would be considered to be well respected in their fields of teaching in the local area to look at drafts of the Quality Standards and Outcomes Statements. I was also involved in the Quality Standards Meeting held in Canberra and I enjoyed the opportunity to share real life experiences with other professionals at the coal face. (QTA, female, 42, government, early childhood)

Not long after I was told I was to receive the award I was offered a transfer to the - - - - - Institute. The - - - - - Institute have been very supportive of my transfer and have provided me with many opportunities to further develop my skills and abilities in my teaching, particularly online delivery. I am currently delivering online modules to students located in Kirrabati. I believe that the recognition I have received since my award has impacted the opportunities offered to me considerably. (QTA, female, 40, TAFE, software applications)

I really have mixed feelings about it. Every time I get a phone call or letter with 'Quality Teaching Award' on it I get a little tingle of pleasure at the reminder of it and a big feeling of 'oh no, what do I need to do now!!' Please don't feel I'm ungrateful at it all though – probably sounds like it but I'm just being honest for you. Also have found the whole process to be very invasive in a way causing me or what makes me tick to be put out on display for all to comment on or think about. But – that might also all be part of my growing professionally and one day I'll look back and feel glad it all happened. (QTA, female, 34, government, secondary, science/agriculture)

My entire life has changed due to this teaching award. As a result of receiving it, my superintendent offered me a year-long position in the Central Administration of our rather large school district. ... I found I enjoyed administration as much as teaching, and that my influence reached much farther than the walls of my classroom. I decided to stay in administration and feel I have made major contributions that benefit the students here as a result of my work as an instructional specialist. In addition, I have been able to exert influence I never believed possible. I have testified before Congress on teacher quality, one of the highlights of my life, offered the [US] vice president advice on education, have the ear of lawmakers, am involved with colleges' teacher preparation programs, am often called by local and state school board members, and helped a national company revamp its reading comprehension program. I am not a different person than before, but I have a title that opens doors ... I don't think I fully appreciated what the award meant until halfway through my year as state teacher of the year. While I was testifying before Congress, I thought, 'These people are listening to me and some of what I advise or say will be adopted. This is an incredible moment!' Since then I've had other incredible moments in which I felt that because of my position, I was able to have a major influence and affect policy. I am continually asked to serve on state and national committees, opportunities I never would have been offered with 'the award.' (US, female, 50, government, primary)

### Career Advancement

Related to the above issue of 'doors opening' and enhanced professional influence is the issue of career advancement – including promotion – flowing from receiving a teaching award. Not surprisingly, the US sample had experienced a greater degree of career enhancement (41%) attributable to teaching awards than did the QTA sample (14%), the latter having more recently received their awards. However, QTA recipients did express the view that they expected their award to be beneficial and anecdotal evidence since the survey was completed indicates that several more QTA recipients have since been offered promotion (i.e., to head teacher, assistant principal, Associate Professor, etc. ).

The award itself was basically officially ignored by the University of ----- but was well regarded by my colleagues. It was also well received by the interviewing panel at the NSW Board of Studies when I applied [successfully] for a ... position. (QTA, female, 52, university, history)

The award has been a driving force in my application for promotion positions. Many principals and assistant principals I have spoken to have encouraged me to apply for these positions. (QTA, female, 44, non-government primary)

I intend to use it in applying for promotion. I think the rigour issue, when it is made more widely known, will mean that this award gains prestige alongside the Australian Awards for University Teaching. Given the nature of the process, I'd hope that the QTA will eventually be seen as a 'top-end' benchmark where criteria for professional advancement are based on teaching quality. (QTA, male, 48, university, teacher education) [since promoted]

There has been much encouragement to apply for a variety of promotion positions (much to my principal's angst) due both to the publicity attached with this award plus my involvement in other activities in our local district. (i.e. other principals telling me of coming up jobs in their schools etc.) (QTA, female, 34, government, secondary science/agriculture) [since promoted to Head Teacher at another school]

I have been fortunate enough to gain promotion to Principal [of a small school] ... I had not considered this move before the award last year and feel it had a substantial impact in the merit selection process. (QTA, female, government, primary)

At this stage the Quality Teaching Award has not made any impact on my career professionally. I do however feel it will be of great assistance for the future of my teaching career. (QTA, female, 34, government, primary)

Because I am a critical curriculum theorist and there are no other curriculum theorists in my dept or college, and I was up for reappointment, the award greatly facilitated my reappointment. (US, female, 58, university, research)

I believe [the awards] have made a difference in my applications for grad school and still do in pursuing grants or consultation work. They gave me credibility. (US, female, 50, university, mathematics education)

I won the award while in graduate school. I believe it helped me get a tenure-track position with a major university. It was a small factor, I'm sure, but I believe it did help. (US, female, 41, university, psychology)

I hope that the award will help me be promoted to full professor next year; it is a great line on my vitae. (US, female, 59, university, teacher education)

### Negative, Mixed or No Reactions from Others

More than a third of the US sample experienced either no recognition (13%) or negative reactions from others (27%) with their teaching award. The latter was often expressed in terms of 'most people were supportive, but ...'. These proportions were greater with the QTA sample, with more than 80% experiencing either no discernable

recognition (36%) or negative reactions from some (45%), including jealousy and resentment.

There are a number of possible factors behind these findings. Firstly, the USA has a longer and stronger history of awards for teaching, ranging from the 'building' to national level, as evident in the histories of those participating in the study. Awards, and even competition for awards, is commonplace. In Australia, however, there is possibly more suspicion of and even opposition to teaching awards, which are fewer in number. This was borne out in developing and introducing the QTA. Some have identified, anecdotally at least, a 'tall poppy syndrome' as being part of the nation's psyche. The QTA is also a 'new' award, with there being some uncertainty, no doubt, of its nature and importance. This may change over time.

#### Comments included:

The reaction from others has in some ways been mixed. My family and friends have been very excited about me receiving the award. I have found at work the majority of my peers have been very happy for me but there have been a few that have the attitude that the award is just another piece of paper that really doesn't give you anything. I have tried to show them what it has meant to me and that it is worth having. (QTA, female, 43, TAFE/VET, computing)

Professional colleagues, friends and family certainly reacted very positively. University administration apparently does not value quality teaching. (QTA, female, 52, university, history)

I would say that almost every colleague I know has been very supportive saying things like 'its about time' and '... we always knew you were a great teacher ...'. There was one however who has made some disparaging remarks like 'Oh you know you only got nominated because the principal wanted to make herself look good' ... along with a couple of other snide comments. It has made me sad. (QTA, female, 42, government, early childhood)

There has been strong support from schools and also from the broader community in which I live and work. There has also been some feelings of resentment and some jibes from others. The award can attach an even greater expectation that you are the 'Expert' which is dangerous ground to tread. (QTA, male, 39, government, behaviour support)

I have had some mixed reactions to the award. At a local and campus level, friends, family, associates and students have been most congratulatory. ... At an Institute level, the award has been acknowledged from afar. I don't think they really understand how important the award is. At a faculty level, the award did not seem to mean much at all – I was recently interviewed for a full time position for the job I have been doing for the past 3 to 4 years and was unsuccessful in obtaining it. The award was glossed over in the interview ... There was not enough time to show the portfolio properly at the interview and the other panel members didn't seem too interested either. Was it some sort of jealousy I ask? Why didn't they want to know? (QTA, male, 43, TAFE, fine arts)

Most people have reacted beautifully to my award ... my principal has been the most supportive person ... Most teachers on staff reacted positively. There were a few who I am sure thought I did not deserve the award. You would be naive to



think everyone was as pleased as you were! ... I was at one stage wanting the principal to stop talking about the award. I felt that the tall poppy syndrome was about, but I soon got over that feeling. (QTA, female, 44, non-government, primary)

There have inevitably been one or two slightly 'sour grapes' who have wondered 'Why her and not me?' expressing themselves by watching for mistakes and some snide comments. Since I make no claim to be perfect (and often wonder Why me?), this has not been important but is, I guess, an inevitable manifestation of 'tall poppy syndrome' – wasted on a very short plant. The warmth of the majority of my colleagues has far outweighed these few. (QTA, female, 48, government, secondary science)

But there were those, including very close teaching friends and a teaching sister-in-law who were plainly unimpressed ... the ultimate hurt came from colleagues. The Monday following the ceremony, I was in Sydney at a ----- meeting of district personnel. ----- announced my award with great excitement, acknowledging that 'one of us' had been successful. Before making a presentation at the conference as had been arranged, I was asked to say something about the process. I made this short and to the point but encouraged others to nominate teachers as the process, although exacting, was very worthwhile. I then gave my power point presentation. The two 'ladies' who followed me began their task with the comment that they had been at the back discussing things and had decided that the reason that they had not been given the award was that their presentation was only overheads! The sad part was that they were serious about the insult. Others on the day, refused to even speak to me. It was the one time that I regretted ever having agreed to participate! (QTA, female, 52, government, district office)

Most who have expressed themselves were positive, supportive, and happy for me. A few were inspired to pursue similar awards and to challenge their own levels of achievement. Some were jealous. (US, male, 57, university, French literature)

Perhaps, because the award was new, my colleagues were also unprepared. For a while, communication with other teachers was awkward. They did not like one teacher being honoured over others. The faculty were kind in their acknowledgement. The students were enthusiastic in their response. (US, female, 50, university, special education)

My closest friend in the department was hurt that she didn't get the award. (US, female, 40, university, educational psychology)

Most had no discernible response; some colleagues were congratulatory. Others were jealous and claimed it was a 'popularity contest.' Those of us who were recognised knew better. (US, female, 36, university, communication/English)

For the most part, others have reacted with respect. Truth to tell, some peers have displayed envy. In still other cases, some administrators have resented the 'soapbox' that the award offered, but that has as much to do with my outspokenness as with the award per se. (US, male, 60, university, economics)

I was told that a teaching award at the higher education level was somewhat dangerous for faculty - that it made tenure unlikely. (US, female, 46, university, physics)

## Value of the Awards Process

As noted, the QTA process involves referees' reports, a portfolio and site visits. The US teaching awards covered the spectrum from anonymous selection to self-nomination with portfolio. With the QTA recipients, 24 (83%) made positive comments about the process, particularly the reflection engendered by the portfolio. More than half also spoke positively of the value of the site visits - there were only a few negative comments about these and they tended to be qualified by acknowledgement of the benefits, the main problem being stress and fear associated with the visits initially. Comments are for QTA only, with many similar comments not cited for reasons of space:

The overall experience was superb. At first, I was a little overwhelmed by what had to be done. However, it made me stop and reflect on my many years in education and why I chose teaching as a profession. It made me think about all the wonderful people I have been fortunate to work with and the great students I have taught. (QTA, male, 42, government, secondary, behaviour support)

My experience of the QTA process was a growing one. I am so glad that I was nominated and then decided to continue with the processes as I have learnt and gained so much from the process. I am currently mentoring nominees from the ----- Institute of TAFE for the 2002 awards. This has given me so much satisfaction in being able to be part of the process all over again. Probably the best part about the whole process was the observation, to have assessors come into my classroom and see what I do and then be able to discuss this afterwards was very rewarding. (QTA, female, 43, TAFE/VET)

The process of constructing a portfolio was an interesting one, ensuring reflection upon and evaluation of one's teaching career. This was quite demanding in itself, particularly the gathering of evidence for each criterion. The inspection visit itself was not at all daunting - again due, no doubt, to the personnel involved. I was delighted to receive the award and to have one's efforts recognised and rewarded. (QTA, female, 52, university, history)

It was demanding but rewarding. It was good to get the portfolio together, I spent a lot of time on this, but this was reasonably easy as I had a CV already. I enjoyed the visits by the assessors as this gave me a chance to talk about my teaching and for them to observe me teaching in a fairly natural setting. (QTA, male, 39, government, primary)

The QTA process was hard work, but extremely rewarding. The site visit was nerve-racking, but that was more because the outcome meant so much to me than any thing to do with the demeanour of the visitors who were kind and supportive throughout the day. (QTA, female, 52, university, history/politics)

It was very exacting and at times overwhelming. It was also a great way to validate, appreciate and consolidate your beliefs about what you do each working day in the classroom and the wider school community. To look at and reflect on what growth had occurred in my teaching and learning styles. It gave me a chance to evaluate teaching strategies and revisit past teaching experiences. It was like a celebration of what you had done and an opportunity to reflect on what you value in your own achievements and those of your students. The portfolio has become a wonderful 'Snap shot' of my career. (QTA, female, 40, government, primary)



The process brings an individual to terms with formative factors in their career, inspires continuing commitment and encourages the adopting of a profile beyond the classroom. It encourages a reflection on 'Where am I now and where am I going before my years in teaching end and the opportunity to create a better educational future for tomorrow's generation is ultimately denied me'. (QTA, female, 52, government, secondary English)

I found the experience a very worthwhile professional development process. It really made me critically evaluate myself as a teacher. It was at first difficult to see where I could provide evidence that I had met the criteria. But as I thought more about what I had done over the years I was able to find examples. This showed me the diverse experiences I had been involved in during my teaching career. It also showed that whilst a teacher may not do all of the things in any one period of time that describe high teaching standards, they do pay attention to all of these criteria throughout their career. It seems sensible that this happens as your attention turns to different things at different points of your working life and due to the different contexts that you find yourself in. (QTA, female, 37, university, teacher education)

The QTA process was extremely draining and really made me wonder if in fact I wished to continue through the process. The portfolio took many hours of preparation and soul searching. The pre-school visit period was equally as stressful. Reflecting back afterwards though, it was actually a most rewarding and helpful procedure. It enabled us all to question what we were doing, something that most teachers have insufficient time to do. Having completed the process I think it was very worthwhile. (QTA, female, 44, government, primary)

The Quality Teaching Award process was a very interesting process for me. I found the portfolio to be very daunting at first, and something which I didn't feel I would be able to complete. Once I had completed the portfolio, I was very proud of it and was really glad I had been given the opportunity to reflect on my beliefs as a teacher and to recognise the accomplishments of my career thus far. The in school visit was a terrifying experience for me, however it allowed me to demonstrate my strengths both inside and outside the classroom in the environment I work in. The Quality Teaching Award process was an invaluable time in my career and I found the opportunity to reflect on my teaching to be the most rewarding part of the whole process. (QTA, female, 34, government, primary)

Without wanting to sound too dramatic – I though it was fantastic!!! I learnt so much about myself, my professional beliefs and abilities that I think it has been a significant milestone in my career. I feel that I have the opportunity to move into any area which evokes my interest and that I will always find ways to meet new challenges. I think being such a rigorous process – particularly the portfolio and the on site teaching assessment was a fantastic opportunity for professional growth as it provided an opportunity to not only reflect upon my own practice as a professional but the feedback was constructive and has been helpful in me really knowing that I know what constitutes a 'good' teacher and as I lead staff and work with them I can support them in a much more confident way. (QTA, female, 50, TAFE, child studies)

## Changed Views on Teaching

Finally, there was a range of comments, particularly from QTA recipients, that the award had not just affirmed but changed their views of teaching:

It is an affirming and enriching experience. The recognition of my contribution has invigorated me personally. The QTA is a milestone in my life in that it has helped me put things in perspective, such as rediscovering what's most important to me and prioritising what I would like to do from now on. I'm now more keenly aware of my ability, capability and potential and more ready to take on new challenges. This semester, I started doing an M.A. in e-Learning at UTS (a 2-year part-time course, my second M.A. degree) because I'm interested in exploring the potential of this emerging field of study. The first semester is now almost finished and I'm doing well. With full-time work and a family, I know this isn't going to be easy, but the QTA has given me the impetus, courage and confidence to pursue what I think is important. (QTA, female. 53, government, primary)

I think it has certainly made me focus on my teaching more and be aware of preparing teaching/learning activities that enhance children's learning. I think I am teaching better and am just as enthusiastic about my teaching as before. Belonging to a professional association has been rewarding as well. I have been involved in College activities on a local level and am enjoying the professional reading that has been distributed by the college. (QTA, male, 39, government, primary)

## **IMPLICATIONS**

There are a number of implications that can be derived from the two studies and these are offered for consideration. These resonate with the findings of previous work on teacher satisfaction and recognition mentioned previously (i.e., Dinham, 1992; Dinham, 2000; Dinham & Scott, 2000) and are consistent with the general thrust of developments in Australia towards professional teaching standards and teacher registration/accreditation.

1. Teachers are in need of, and even hungry for recognition. However, the processes for identifying and recognising teachers' accomplishments must be and must be seen to be authentic and the recognition warranted if this recognition is to have credibility and value to the individual and the profession.
2. Teachers need an avenue and mechanism to promote reflection on their professional practice, achievements, and professional development. Those surveyed expressed a view that reflection was of great value, but that it was difficult to engender in day-today teaching.
3. Teachers appear to lack a frame of reference to judge their own worth, partly due to a lack of feedback from others. They also rarely have the opportunity to see other teachers 'in action'. For teachers not used to it, having another educator 'invade their teaching space' can be stressful, yet when this occurs in a professional fashion, it can be highly valuable and affirming.

4. Reflection, validation, affirmation, deeper thinking, career re-orientation enhanced motivation and powerful emotional responses can all flow from an effective teaching award process.
5. Affirmation and recognition can lead to increased confidence and promote greater risk taking.
6. Broader based awards have greater credibility with teachers than 'in house' awards.
7. Inevitably, some will react negatively to a teacher's award, but demonstrated rigour and earned credibility of awards can ameliorate this to some extent. In a climate where authentic, warranted recognition of teachers' achievements occurs more freely, negative reactions from others might be reduced.
8. There is great value in professional learning portfolios based upon agreed professional teaching standards. However, for some teachers, the portfolio is still an alien concept and teachers need thoughtful guidance if they are not to find the construction of a portfolio 'from scratch' overwhelming. Portfolios need to be developmental rather than simply summative and introduced early in teachers' preparation and careers.
9. It is important to teachers that their context and workplace be recognised when any assessment takes place. Going into a teacher's 'back yard' to recognise where they work and whom they work with sends a powerful message that they as an individual are valued. However, as one QTA recipient noted, it can also be 'terrifying' to the uninitiated.
10. Peer assessment and affirmation is highly regarded by teachers when professionally conducted.
11. There is much critical professional knowledge and experience that is 'hidden'. Teaching awards are a way of identifying, recognising, enhancing, and possibly transferring this knowledge and expertise. Coupled with this, there are many other 'hidden treasures' equally deserving of recognition.
12. It is important, however, not to over-burden recipients of teaching awards to the detriment of their teaching.

## CONCLUSION

Awards for teaching excellence can result in a range of intended, desirable and to some degree, unintended, undesirable outcomes. There are difficulties associated with creating authentic, credible processes to ensure that the 'right' teachers receive the recognition they deserve and indeed need for their on-going professional development.

However, the powerful benefits that those in the two samples of award recipients derived from their awards make a compelling argument to persist with and expand the present range of means we have to recognise teaching excellence in all its forms and locations.

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## 2. Email Survey: Teaching Award Recipients Reference Group

### QUESTIONS FOR TEACHING AWARD RECIPIENTS

#### Confidential

1. Can you describe what receiving a teaching award has meant to you personally?
2. Can you describe what receiving a teaching award has meant to you professionally?
3. How have others reacted to your award?
4. Overall, how did you find your experience of the award selection process? (Begin by describing briefly how you were selected)
5. Are there any other comments you would like to make about teaching awards? (specifically about your award(s) or generally)

#### Please Provide Your Details

The name of the teaching award(s) received:

Year award(s) received:

Years of Professional Experience (total):

Sector (e.g., non-government elementary):

Specialisation (if applicable, e.g., physics):

Country:

State:

Your age:

Your sex:

## APPENDICES

### 1. Email Survey: NSW Quality Teaching Award Winners

#### QUESTIONS FOR QUALITY TEACHING AWARD RECIPIENTS 2001

##### Confidential

1. Can you describe what receiving a Quality Teaching Award has meant to you personally?
2. Can you describe what receiving a Quality Teaching Award has meant to you professionally?
3. How have others reacted to your award?
4. Overall, how did you find your experience of the QTA process?
5. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the Quality Teaching Awards?

##### Please Provide Your Details

Age

Sex

Years of Professional Experience

Sector (e.g., non-government primary)

Specialisation (if applicable, e.g., physics)



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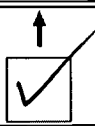


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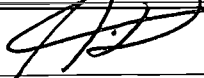
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