

Australian Teacher Education Association

Annual Conference Proceedings Archive



Please cite this paper as:

Jasman, A. (2010). *Future directions: analysis of Australian initial teacher education policy initiatives*. Refereed paper presented at 'Teacher education for a sustainable future', the annual conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA), Townsville, 4–7 July.

Published by: Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA)

Available via stable URL: https://atea.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2010_jasman.pdf

Review status: Refereed—abstract and full paper blind peer-reviewed

Peer-review refereeing process: The conference committee for the annual conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA) facilitates the review of all papers for admission to the conference. Abstracts for all papers presented are reviewed by the organising committee as to suitability for presentation as research at the annual conference, but full paper refereeing is optional. Only full, peer-reviewed papers actually presented at the conference are published on the ATEA website.

Refereed papers were subject to a thorough and anonymous peer review process that involved a blind review of the research publication in its entirety by independent qualified experts from the field of teacher education. Provisionally accepted papers were returned to the author/s for revision before inclusion in the conference proceedings. The refereeing system was administered by the ATEA Conference Convenor and committee. The results of the peer review process are reported directly to the authors and recorded by the Conference Convenor.

The ATEA Conference Proceedings Archive listing on our website is the ultimate authority on which papers were refereed.

© Australian Teacher Education Association, 2010. Although copyright of papers published in the annual conference proceedings is held by ATEA, authors retain the right to rework their papers for publication in other venues. Where a paper is to be reproduced in its entirety, permission should be sought from the ATEA Executive.

Future directions: analysis of Australian initial teacher education policy initiatives.

Associate Professor Anne Jasman (Teacher Education)
University of Southern Queensland
Toowoomba, QLD 4350
anne.jasman@usq.edu.au

Submitting full paper for reviewing

Abstract: Jasman (2009) conducted a comparative analysis of policy trajectories in England and Australia, identifying a number of issues likely to inform teacher education policy over the next ten years. For example, it is likely that both the quantity and quality of new entrants to teaching will remain key policy drivers and that there will be increasing centralised control over initial teacher education provision. I also argued that past assumptions about initial teacher education, often expressed as binaries, must be challenged to provide appropriate initial teacher education for future education scenarios. For example, beginning teachers are expected to build their expertise on what is valued from the past with little attention paid to what might be in the future, nor do we consider the generational differences in the experience of young children entering school today when compared to ten or twenty years ago. There is no *best* practice and ‘one size fits all’ cannot meet the needs of children and young people in the education systems of the future.

This paper takes forward this policy analysis discussing trends in the development of policy relating to initial teacher education and particularly those emerging in the last six months within Australia. Of particular interest is the continuing uncertainty surrounding the development and use of Professional Standards for Teachers and/or Teaching. The content of the National Professional Standards for Teachers and the possible alignment of State and Territory standards with the graduate standards in the most recent consultation document produced by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership are examined through the lens of ‘continuity’. This paper also argues for greater opportunities for the engagement of **all** stakeholders who have a concern for the future of educational provision and the achievement of all students across a broad and challenging curriculum. In conclusion, the role of national professional standards as we continue to engage with rapid change in the sector is discussed.

Jasman, A.M. (2009) A critical analysis of initial teacher education policy in Australia and England: past, present and possible futures, *Teacher Development*, 13, 4, 321-333.

Introduction

Economic globalisation is now the dominant discourse in politics and this discourse is shaping the future of education. Politicians have placed quality teaching and teachers at the heart of achieving competitive advantage in a globalised knowledge economy. With this agenda in the forefront, governments are increasingly taking control over determining what

counts as quality teaching and quality teachers through deciding what teachers have to ‘know and do’ and how they are prepared for entering the education workforce.

Teacher and teaching quality is seen as essential for maintaining and improving competitiveness in a global economy. In order to create the skilled workforce necessary to compete globally, governments also require greater accountability from those who provide educational services.

The circular argument has developed that teacher and teaching quality is critical to achieving the best educational outcomes (defined through international and national comparisons of achievement test data) and that teachers who achieve the best educational outcomes are quality teachers. Economic advantage is seen as the sole purpose of education. Teacher quality and hence initial teacher education is constructed as a public policy problem, with solutions being sought that are supposedly based on research and evidence and driven by the need to improve outcomes. Initial teacher education policy developments in Australia are becoming more closely aligned with this ‘new teacher education’ (Cochran-Smith, 2008).

Alongside this process to achieve greater control and accountability is also the desire to create educational outcomes that are futures –focussed and appropriate for the knowledge creation which lies at the heart of the knowledge economy. These two policy drivers do not necessarily lead to actions that take teachers and teaching practices in the same direction.

In a comparative analysis of policy trajectories in England and Australia in relation to initial teacher education (A. M. Jasman, 2009) government and policy makers were seen to

‘focus on the maintenance of both the quantity and the quality of new entrants to the teaching profession, and increasingly seek control of the quality assurance and accountability mechanisms that shape the implicit and/or explicit values, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment of initial teacher education provision.’(2009, 327)

This control in England has been achieved through the work of the Training and Development Agency for the Children’s Workforce¹. This control is largely articulated through the development of professional standards which are used both to accredited teacher preparation programmes and as a basis for teacher registration (A. M. Jasman 2009) where graduation from an accredited programme acts as a proxy and assures teacher quality on entry to the profession. In this paper, I provide a brief overview of professional standards developments through the lens of stakeholder continuity over the last 25 years (A. Jasman, 2003). This is followed by a more detailed analysis of recent policy initiatives relating to professional standards (November 2009 – May 2010). These confirm and add weight to arguments outlined in Jasman (2009) concerning the increasing control by government - federal, state and territory of what is included as part of becoming a beginning teacher.

Are professional standards for quality teachers or quality teaching?

Before any consideration of professional standards for initial teacher education it is essential to distinguish between teacher quality and teaching quality. Teacher quality describes the quality of the attributes held by the teacher on graduation and as they progress through his or

¹ This organisation is funded by central government and the Secretary of State provides an annual remit letter documenting policy and implementation activities that the Agency is expected to achieve. There is a government nominated Board and Chair. In effect this is an arm of government that is not subject to parliamentary control and accountability.

her career. These attributes include professional knowledge, skills, commitments and values. Teaching quality which is what the teacher is able to do within a particular context, however, is dependent on a wide range of other factors including: the characteristics of the children and young people, leadership, school and community culture, resources, parental support, nature of the curriculum etc. (Cumming & Jasman, 2003).

Whilst initial teacher education provides for teacher quality on graduation there is no guarantee that this will translate directly into teaching quality, particularly if graduates find themselves in challenging circumstances due to the particular characteristics associated with the context they are working in.

Quality teaching is recognized when a teacher enables children or young people to learn and achieve the best educational outcomes of which they are capable within the context that they work. I would suggest that to align professional standards appropriately we should be determining teacher quality on entry, but thereafter, if we are interested in improving the quality of teaching then the context becomes critical. There can be no benefit to considering teacher quality without considering the context in which it takes place. Improvement of educational outcomes then becomes the responsibility not only of the teachers but also of systems, the community and the degree of agreement with the direction and vision of the school. However, both teaching and teacher quality are often used interchangeably within the development of professional standards. The use of standards to achieve better educational outcomes is a partial policy solution at best.

However, in terms of determining the qualities of the teacher on entry to the profession a standards framework may be of value, it may also serve to help benchmark the minimum expectations for teachers to enter the profession. In this context the important question becomes who determines what this standard is?

In the following section a brief historical overview of professional standards development between 1990 and 2010 is presented through the lens of 'stakeholder continuity'. In this analysis continuity describes the degree to which key stakeholders continued to be involved in the debates on the content and organisation of standards used to judge either the quality of teachers entering the profession from initial teacher education programmes.

Continuity in stakeholder engagement in professional standards development

In Australia the development of professional standards could be characterised by the phrase 'letting a thousand flowers bloom.' These 'flowers' represent the views of multiple and different combinations of stakeholders working to achieve different outcomes. Louden (1994) argued that the impetus for standards in the 1990's in Australia was linked to 'fundamental reforms in occupational training and accreditation in industry' (96 - 97). This appears to be linked to the difficulties experienced by the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) in recognising professional overseas qualifications (Masters & McCurry, 1990) which led to the development of competency frameworks and occupational standards in a number of professions, including law, nursing, accountancy and veterinary science (A. Jasman, 1997). In the early 1990's no comparable national occupational standards had been developed for the teaching profession. Interestingly the recognition of teacher qualifications (as a proxy for teacher professional standards) continued without the development of

occupational standards. By 2001 the recognition of teaching qualifications of overseas migrants in Australia was located in the Department for Education, Training and Youth Affairs. This function was again relocated in 2006 from the then Department for Education, Science and Training to Teaching Australia, now the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership².

Accreditation of teacher education programs and entry to the teaching profession was organised in line with qualification or registration requirements, where they existed, within States and Territories. This is still the current situation. Therefore, the quality of teachers entering the profession is assured through the proxy of a teacher education qualification recognised by a State or Territory registration and regulation authority. There are still no national standards for teachers against which such programs might be quality assured. As noted in Jasman (2003) standards developments within Australia were in their early stages in 1996. For example,

the first national initiative completed was the development of National Competency Standards for Beginning Teachers (Australian Teaching Council, 1996a) under the auspices of the Commonwealth funded National Project for Quality in Teaching and Learning (NPQTL). At state level a professional development 'competency' framework for experienced teachers was developed in Western Australia as part of the Commonwealth funded National Professional Development Program (NPDP) (A. Jasman, 1994). Thus the key player in standards development at this stage was the Commonwealth government through its financial support of NPQTL and NPDP.

These approaches were based on a partnership model involving key stakeholders. Many of these stakeholders were also represented on the Australian Teaching Council - a national body established for the teaching profession as part of the NPDP initiatives. This was quickly disbanded following the change of federal government in 1996. It became clear that unions and professional associations would not be involved in contributing to professional teaching standards. However, interest in their development continued with researchers, academics and representatives of registration boards and state authorities already involved in standards setting in Australia and New Zealand meeting regularly. However, there were no practitioners or members representing education unions or professional associations within this grouping.

In 1998 the Australian Council of Deans of Education commissioned a research study that resulted in the development of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education (Australian Council for Deans of Education, 1998). Also a conference for school systems, teacher registration boards and researchers on Professional Standards and the Status of Teaching took place in Western Australia early in 1998.

At the same time several universities and teacher professional associations (Ingvarson, 1996) were publishing their work on standards development in the areas of English, Mathematics and Science. Thus the profession through its associations and unions as well as key academics and researchers in the field continued to work towards the development of teacher

²http://www.aitsl.edu.au/ta/webdav/site/tasite/shared/Skills%20Assessment/2010/Skills_Assessment_Application_Form.pdf

and teaching standards based on the premise that ownership of standards must lie within the profession.

At the same time the Senate Inquiry into the Status of Teaching (Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998) recommended that the Commonwealth Government should facilitate the development of a national professional teaching standards and a registration body to develop and maintain standards of professional practice. In the overview to the report, the Chairperson stated:

*Teaching needs to be accepted as a profession. To reinforce that view, the recommendations of this report aim to **give teachers responsibility for professional standards in teaching and governments responsibility for staffing, facilities and back up support***³ *The Committee accepts that teachers are central to the quality of students' learning and that therefore it is necessary to support teachers more effectively ...it is clear from the evidence presented to this Committee that governments ignore community commitment to education at their peril* (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1998, 2-3).

Between 1997 and 2001 a number of meetings occurred where representatives of professional associations, state and territory government departments, academics and researchers met to discuss ways forward in professional standards development. At the same time both the Australian Education Union of Australia and the Independent Education Union Federal Executive published on standards for the teaching profession. The Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce (TQELT) was also established in 2001 to provide advice relevant to this initiative which included:

- teacher preparation and ongoing development aimed at improving the quality and standard of teaching and learning, and
- professional standards for teachers and principals, both for entry to the profession and to meet the ongoing needs of students over time.

Ministers agreed to adopt a developmental approach in furthering work on a national standards framework for the teaching profession and approved the development of the first stage, which is to establish the structural components of quality teaching at stages of a teacher's career. Thus in 2002 a newly constituted National Reference Group on Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism was established and supported financially by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training⁴. This group was the most representative so far to be involved in constituting professional teaching standards.

³ Emphasis added

⁴ Members of this group included representatives of the following organisations: Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers; Australian Association for Research in Education; Australian Association for the Teaching of English; Australian Council for Computers in Education; Australian Council of Deans of Education; Australian College of Educators; Australian Council for Educational Leaders; Australian Curriculum Studies Association; Australian Education Union; Australian Literacy Educators Association; Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Committee; Australian Science Teachers Association; Board of Teacher Registration, Queensland (now the Queensland College of Teachers); Department of Education,

Alongside these developments several States were working on various forms of competency and professional standards frameworks. For example, Queensland (Queensland Consortium for Professional Development in Education, 1999) Victoria, (Standards Council of the Teaching Profession, 1997) and Western Australia (A. Jasman, 1998) all had some form of standards framework. In some cases the employers were linking these to career paths, professional development expectations and recognition of accomplishment in teaching (A. Jasman & Barrera, 1998). These developments continued so all States and Territories except the ACT had in place a Board, College or Institute and professional standards to support the registration of teachers by the mid-2000's.

By 2003 standards development activities had taken place on four major fronts:

- national subject associations producing subject specific standards
- a generic standards framework supported by the Australian Association for Research in Education, Australian College of Educators, and the Australian Curriculum Studies Association;
- state and territory initiatives; and
- federally through MCEETYA and the Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce.

In discussions at that time 'many talked about 'a moment in time' or 'a window of opportunity' for the profession to have some input into the form, content and purposes of any developments of professional teaching standards' (Jasman, 2003, 11). It was also argued that this 'window of opportunity' was created by synergies including

- *a 'radical' transformation of the profile and experience of the teaching profession,*
- *change in pedagogies, curriculum and assessment regimes in some States,*
- *increased understandings about quality teaching and its impact on learning outcomes,*
- *development of capacity through leadership, networks and collaboration, and*
- *an evidence-base regarding factors impacting on teacher and school effectiveness and improvement.*

The question was also asked as to whether 'it was possible to address the needs of the profession and take a stance regarding protecting 'the public good'. through a National Framework for Standards of the Teaching Profession? Perhaps we will know in five years time.' (Jasman, 2003, 12)

Now in 2010 it is evident that this outcome was not achieved. Again a change in government resulted in removal of support for this initiative. However, from this work a smaller group comprising teacher subject and principals' professional associations secured funding to establish the National Institute for Quality in Teaching and School Leadership.

Science and Training; Independent Education Union of Australia; Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce (MCEETYA) and the National Education Forum.

The Institute was reconstituted as Teaching Australia in 2005-6 and continued to investigate the development of professional standards for teachers and principals but with a strong focus on enhancing the status of the profession, building public confidence and respect (Teaching Australia Network, 2009). In terms of continuity, the personnel involved in these developments were drawn from a relatively stable pool between 1990-2009, although different stakeholders held the 'chair' and therefore had more influence on the purpose, nature and buy-in from other key stakeholders.

This pattern was recently disrupted when Teaching Australia became the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership on 1st January 2010 (see <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/ta/go>). As noted earlier the key stakeholders represented on the Board of Teaching Australia included Principals' and subject associations. The Board members of AITSL include nominees from all jurisdictions and a range of stakeholders including the Catholic and Independent education sectors, education unions and professional associations. The major shift here is the inclusion of the education unions and all States and Territories.

The remit for the Board in relation to initial teacher education is clearly spelled out by the Hon Julia Gillard MP in her letter⁵ to the incoming chair of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.

The implementation of a new standards-based national Teaching Professional Framework will provide consistent national processes and principles to oversee a set of national standards for teaching and school leadership and implement an agreed system of national accreditation for teachers based on these standards. The Framework will guide reform in the areas of teacher registration, accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses and accreditation of teachers at the graduate, competent, highly accomplished and lead teacher levels and inform professional learning and performance appraisal.

There has however been a subtle shift in the consultation documentation which refers not to a framework of professional teaching standards but to National Professional Standards for Teachers. This formulation may be appropriate for entry to the profession, but unfortunately the standards also provide descriptors for teacher quality at 'proficient', 'accomplished' and 'lead' level, where the nexus is between teaching quality and educational outcomes, mediated by the context.

Through this discussion I suggest that the principle policy lever used to achieve accountability and therefore more control over schools, teachers and student achievement is through the colonization of professional standards. This is evidenced by a shift in the 'ownership' of what goes in the standards as a result of the changes in stakeholder groups who are privileged in determining what goes in the standards.

It is likely that government, the market, the profession as represented by both industrial and professional bodies, the universities or other stakeholder groups will struggle to determine who decides who teaches, what they need to know and be able to do and what values and beliefs they must hold before working with children, young people and adults. If so, there will be greater conflict and tension between competing views of the value of education and

⁵ Accessed May 18th 2010 on ` <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/ta/webdav/site/tasite/shared/homepage/AITSL%20-%20Letter%20of%20Expectation%20-%2014%20December%202010.pdf>

therefore the qualities that are needed by teachers to provide the proscribed educational experience as well.

Is there the possibility that all key stakeholder groups will be able to reach a consensus work of teacher quality on entry to profession that will meet the needs of society in the future but more importantly create the future through their understanding of what might be needed? Such changes of perspective can only happen if stakeholders look forward to see what is possible, and secure an understanding of the pathways that have led to now and therefore will influence the construction of our possible futures. From these Professional Standards for Teachers it would seem we are looking back not looking forward to the future.

References

- Australian Council for Deans of Education (1998). *Preparing a profession* (A report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project.). Canberra: Australian Council of Deans of Education.
- Australian Teaching Council (1996a). *National competency framework for beginning teaching*. Sydney, NSW: Australian Teaching Council on behalf of the National Working Party on Teacher Competency Standards.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2008). The new teacher education in the United States: directions forward. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 14(4), 271 - 282.
- Cumming, J., & Jasman, A. (2003). *Professional Teaching Standards and the Quality of Education*. Paper presented at the Teacher Status and Qualifications for Education Quality Project, Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development Bangkok, Thailand.
- Ingvarson, L. (1996). Professional standards for the teaching of science: what roles for the ASTA? *Australian Science Teachers Journal*, 42(2), 7-12.
- Jasman, A. (1994). *Competency framework for experienced teachers. A report to the WA Cross-sectoral Steering Committee*. Perth, W.A.: Murdoch University: National Professional Development Program.
- Jasman, A. (1997). *Professional competencies and standards* (Review of the Literature No. 1). Perth, Western Australia: Centre for Curriculum and Professional Development, Murdoch University.
- Jasman, A. (1998). *Revised draft professional competency standards for Level 3 Classroom Teachers* (No. 4): Report for the Education Department of Western Australia.
- Jasman, A. (2003). *Teacher and teaching standards in Australia*. Paper presented at the The International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement, Sydney.
- Jasman, A., & Barrera, S. (1998). *Teacher career structure: level 3 classroom teachers*. Western Australia: Education Department of Western Australia.
- Jasman, A. M. (2009). A critical analysis of initial teacher education policy in Australia and England: past, present and possible futures. *Teacher Development: An international journal of teachers' professional development*, 13(4), 321-333.
- Masters, G., & McCurry, D. (1990). *Competency-based assessment in the professions*. (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition Research Paper 2). Canberra, A.C.T.: AGPS.
- Queensland Consortium for Professional Development in Education (1999, 14-15 October). *A symposium on professional standards in education*, Brisbane, Queensland.
- Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee (1998). *A class act: inquiry into the status of the teaching profession* (Vol. S). Canberra: Senate Publishing Unit.
- Standards Council of the Teaching Profession (1997). Professional standards for teaching and dimensions of teaching, from <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/stcoun.htm>
- Teaching Australia Network (2009). *Standards for accomplished teachers and principals: a foundation for public confidence and respect*. Canberra: Teaching Australia.