

Chapter 10

Standards Developments in Tasmania

Introduction

During the progress of this study, two developments arose that affect matters addressed in the research: the issuing of *Professional Teaching Standards: A Tasmanian Position* by a working party set up under the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme, and the renewal of registration for teachers in Tasmania by the Teachers Registration Board. Both activities involved standards and were meant to be complementary, due to the participation of the registering body in the standards development process. However, in reality the two processes appeared contradictory, and to not consider adequately the complexities and difficulties identified in research.

The position taken by the researcher in this chapter is that of a classroom teacher with no particular access to the deliberations, arrangements, or communications of those involved with the development of the Tasmanian standards, and the documents referred to were provided by school or union representatives. Such documentation was neither privileged nor controlled. However, at the same time, it was not widely publicised to teachers, and the various working papers were circulated only to the ‘stakeholders’, which excluded members of the teaching profession in Tasmania in general. Few colleagues were aware of any developments in this area, particularly as it occurred during the implementation of the Essential Learnings curriculum framework, which consumed substantial amounts of teacher attention and effort. Consequently, the view of the researcher in this chapter is as one external to the standards developments, and who receives Teachers Registration Board public documentation only. As a result, if the perspective of an informed researcher appears incomplete, it is intentional. The knowledge and views of the average classroom teacher are likely to be far more limited than the few admitted to the standards deliberations.

The Position Paper

The ‘Professional Teaching Standards’ position paper issued in June 2004 was developed by a ‘Central Hub’ established under the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program (Appendix 14). The paper stated that this group had examined standards developed in Tasmania, in other states, and by professional associations. Such examination was not referenced or made available for public scrutiny as to methodology and conclusions. The

twenty one key stakeholder members of this *Hub* were primarily bureaucrats or senior representatives of the non-governmental teaching sector; titles such as Director, Principal, Manager, District Superintendent, etc. There was no explanation in the position paper on how these members were invited or selected to be part of the group. Despite claims that it was conducted ‘along with practising teachers’, membership of the body included only one identified practising *teacher* (from a government primary school) (AGQTP Central Hub 2004, p.11). The only other teacher involvement referred to was a two day forum of 100 teachers in January 2004, the outcomes of which were not specifically detailed or referred to in the document or thereafter (AGQTP Central Hub 2004, p.2).

The level of teacher representation on the *Hub*, one out of 22 members, sent a message that the issue of standards was not one to be developed by practitioners but was to be determined for them under the guidance of non-teachers and bureaucrats. Responsibility for and ownership of the process, by virtue of representation, appears to reside within the managerial level, and the majority of senior functionaries and school leaders clearly aligns the standards agenda not with the classroom, but with the *formal structure* as identified by Pusey (1976). The subordination of teachers excludes them from control of the process and, at a fundamental level, infantilises the profession by reinforcing the view that it needs to be told how to maintain teaching quality. As such, the standards process may have been sowing the seeds of ineffectuality by occupying a dimension that is seen by teachers as outside the classroom, hierarchically superior, and thus unsympathetic, if not hostile.

In failing to assign a major role to teachers in the standards development process, the position paper overlooked the difficulties associated with bringing together quality control standards and accountability. Within one paragraph in the discussion section, it noted that the existence of standards

provides a public account of professional expectations, guidance and direction about the nature of excellent professional performance to which all teachers should aspire. It provides a vehicle for recognising and affirming outstanding professional performance which exists at present (AGQTP Central Hub 2004, p.5).

This is in accord with the principles of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards that determines standards as identifying what it is that all teachers should aspire to, in order to improve their practice. However, the very next sentence of the Tasmanian paper stated that

‘such a framework could also provide a reference point for discussion of accountability and less than adequate performance’ (AGQTP Central Hub 2004, p.5) In this statement the paper raised the spectre of a first generation appraisal process, the flaws of which have been clearly identified in this research. Any such moves towards external accountability in the absence of verifiable and accepted standards within a formative development framework, and conducted by other than teachers, threatens widespread suspicion and fear of bureaucracy and hierarchy sorting good and bad teachers based on criteria external to classroom pedagogy and without consideration of factors affecting particular students or schools. In the worst case, such criteria could rely on student literacy and numeracy outcomes, such as in the United States. More likely would be what has been called the ‘emerging cameo of the “preferred teacher”’ (Smyth et al 1997, p.18).

The issue of accountability was further reinforced within the standards levels presented in the position paper through identification of the recognition of professional competence with the registration process, and that ‘it is not a matter of choice, but a means of ensuring a level of quality for all teachers’ (AGQTP Central Hub 2004, p.6). At the time of this research, initial registration was basically a check of qualifications and police records, and renewal only an acknowledgement of professional development participation - without any verification of form, quality, outcomes, or evidences - or, alternatively, a personal verification of ongoing competence through a process of negative verification. With such statements as accountability, adequate performance, and quality assurance outside of the teaching profession, the way appears to open for teacher registration to be something more. That is where teacher concern would be greatest, because of the potential denial of livelihood.

The Standards Proposals

It is possible to take serious issue with the identification of three standard levels in the discussion: initial entry, recognition of professional competence, and recognition of high accomplishment (AGQTP Central Hub 2004, p.5). The distinction between a new and accomplished teacher would initially appear an obvious one, being the transition from theoretical knowledge of the neophyte to established practice. The setting of standards thus provides something towards which new teachers can direct their efforts and professional learning. However, it is not an issue of just achieving one point and then moving on to a cumulative next level in a linear increasing progression. Rather the practitioner, whose career may well look more like a sine curve, should use the standards as a base against which to renew or improve in an ongoing progression that is career long. High accomplishment cannot be a

perpetual condition measurable by a series of criteria, because the nature of the teaching act changes with society and the progression of the individual through their professional life (Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1994). Rather, the highest accomplishment would be the achievement of a condition of ongoing reflective practice. This difficulty is why the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards methodology does not generate a workplace status or remuneration outcome as such. Rather, it asserts that the standards represent accomplishment to both 'guide the continuing growth and development of the teaching profession', and act as a 'catalyst for significant change in the teaching profession and in education' (NBPTS *Early Adolescence/Generalist Standards* 2001, p.6). The assessment is that the teacher has achieved the recognition of their accomplished peers as having met the standards. There is no intimation that such teachers are better than those who have not moved through the process. Rather, standards certified teachers have experienced a process of comparison against standards that publicly underpin their skills and contribute to ongoing personal growth.

The Recognition Services branch of the Tasmanian Department of Education decided that it would commence its standards analysis from the level of high accomplishment. This was justified on the basis of the Recognition Services element of the Department of Education having 'previous experience and expertise in developing standards at a "best practice" level...It is easier to unpack the other dimensions from this position' (Bett 2004, p.2). This statement was not justified by any reference to research or standards work done elsewhere in Australia or overseas. In effect this statement claimed that it was procedurally more valuable to find what it is we want teachers to do better, before we quantify what it is we want them to do. If standards are a statement of what teachers should do and be good at, then setting them should in fact determine competence through achievement of the same. To not do so is to be *below standard* and be not competent. In aiming to define what exceeds the standard, this methodology presupposes the existence of a base level that has been exceeded. However, that same level, the basis for measuring *above standard*, was absent in the analysis, unless of course the baseline is taken as professional entry. If this was the case, then all teachers registered in Tasmania at the time would have to be deemed at a base standard by virtue of their possession of an appropriate qualification. In the absence of any agreed standards beyond qualifications, and determination of what the *above standard* might be, selection of teachers as such could have no valid basis. The converse, namely identifying entry standards for the teaching profession beyond university qualification, would seem to be both more rational and valid. These could then be applied to all teachers as the foundation for identifying better achievement.

In spite of such issues, and in the absence of any discussion, a functional analysis was conducted, between June and October 2004 and under the auspices of the departmental bureaucracy, to generate some professional elements and indicators of practice, and these were circulated in a progress report (Bett 2004). The elements and indicators were derived by identifying ‘highly accomplished’ teachers who could be ‘unpacked’ in a process described as an ‘expertly facilitated...very rich discussion over two days’ (Bett 2004, p.2). The *recognised* highly accomplished teachers were nominated by ‘key stakeholders’ (Bett 2004, p.2). In the absence of standards, the selection of these exceptional representatives of the profession was, as mentioned above, problematical. Who were the stakeholders, how were the “key” ones selected, and why were they the only ones allowed to nominate? Were those nominating Principals, parents, or students? This research has clearly demonstrated that consultation of students regarding teaching standards does not normally occur, and parents are either powerless or never consulted about issues of teacher competency. Indeed, more often than not parental attempts to affect change are deflected. How were opinions of teaching peers weighted against those of students or of parents? Were the teachers highly accomplished in well-resourced metropolitan schools with intake from higher socio-economic areas, or from regional schools with less access to resources and limited populations? Were they teachers whose students achieved good learning outcomes regardless of their final grading, and were the students able to acknowledge their learning and the teacher’s role in it? Did the group represent ethnic and disadvantaged groupings? Were they among the very few teachers who engage in mutual observation and reflection on their professional needs before selecting professional development options? Further questions could undoubtedly be raised. Such an expert panel can only be considered valid if the means for their participation can be verified and acknowledged. The progress report failed to identify the criteria and thus justify the arbitrary selection of an arbitrary number of teachers to conduct its analysis. In the worst case, the mention of “key stakeholder” participation suggests the nomination by Principals, which raises the spectre of organisationally compliant teachers being identified as ‘highly accomplished’.

The progress report went on to describe the establishment of a writing party, and to make an assurance of broad consultation through an online forum, out of school sessions for teachers in some areas, and the participation of certain professional associations and unions. Whilst this may seem comprehensive, the issue of ownership remains. What was described in both the Tasmanian position paper and the progress report is a bureaucracy-driven process of setting standards for teachers whose acceptance is sought for actions taken and analysis already

concluded. The teachers appear secondary to the process, as was intimated by the progress report and other papers related to this process being sent to principals and not classroom practitioners. This is because responsibility for the development of the standards rests not with teachers but with the Steering Committee, which would ‘oversee the development of all aspects of the *Tasmanian Professional Teaching Standards Framework*’ (Bett 2004, p.4). To further illustrate the movement of the discussion away from the teachers to the bureaucracy, the “highly accomplished” teachers who sought to portray what they saw as best practice were not consulted or informed after their initial involvement. They had fulfilled their role of providing some initial raw, and apparently uninformed, input. Thereafter, they appear not have been considered worthy of further consultation or informing about the progress of their efforts.

The procedures proposed in the position paper, including its recommendations for implementation, were purely summative. The issue of formative versus summative evaluation is critical to the standards debate. The focus of the most recent work on teacher evaluation and standards has been aimed at teachers as reflective and self-modifying entities aware of and continually changing their practice throughout their careers, including the identification and progression of professional development to maintain their professional standards. The emphasis is not on achieving an endpoint, but on being actively engaged in a continuing journey. Such a process can only occur where teaching takes place on a consistent basis in classrooms where teachers are not isolated but open and keen to have interaction on pedagogy with peers, students, and teachers. There is no perfect class situation, but ones where some things work better than others. There are not failed classes, but rather ones where needs must be analysed and changes considered. For this to occur, teachers need to feel secure and encouraged to share successes and failures with other teachers, not with external assessing authorities or hierarchy members. Consequently, from any perspective of teacher quality development and assurance, the recommendations of the position paper contradict both research and experience elsewhere (Ramsey 2000, p.120).

Initial Draft Standards

There was no reference in any of the documentation to consideration of other standards models as a starting point for theoretical consideration, let alone any detailed analysis of standards contents. In the absence of such research, there is a danger that time, resources, and effort would be expended reinventing something that has already been subjected to significant scrutiny elsewhere, such as the United States. If such analysis did occur, the failure to cite the major judgements, including references, denies those outside the immediate circle, teachers in

particular, access to wider intellectual debate and alternative perspectives in the standards construction process.

The progress report of October 2004 contained a paper of some draft standards, identified as the ‘raw material’ resulting from the functional analysis process, namely the two days with the fifteen ‘highly accomplished’ teachers. Some of the presented standards elements appeared very similar to those prepared by Danielson (1996). In spite of significant qualifications presented by the analysis leaders, there were sufficient similarities as to raise questions on the efficiency of the methodology, and anticipated subsequent steering committee and writing team procedures. As an example, Dimension 3, Unit 1: *Manage resources effectively and flexibly*, Element 1.3 *Select and organise appropriate materials and equipment* has the following sub-elements:

- 1.3.1 integrate ICT [Information Communication Technology] into learning programs.
- 1.3.2 support students learning through provision of materials appropriate to the concept.
- 1.3.3 organise classroom to provide maximum access to resources.
- 1.3.4 model the selection of materials and equipment for specific purposes (Tasmanian Professional Teaching Standards Framework (Draft) 2004, pp.4-5).

Danielson’s Distinguished level applied to *Instructional Materials and Resources* notes that ‘Instructional materials and resources are suitable to the instructional goals and engage students mentally. Students initiate the choice, adaptation, or creation of materials to enhance their own purposes’ (Danielson 1996, p.99). The time spent constructing the Tasmanian list could have been reduced by examining Danielson as an example. Indeed, Danielson raises consideration of even superior performance in that it includes teachers having fostered and encouraged students to go beyond the limitations of the resources to either modify or create new forms. A further issue is that Danielson also includes elements of teachers’ work beyond the classroom, in the form of duties and responsibilities also advocated by Scriven (1994). This is of particular significance to schools where the range of participation is wider than core hours, especially co-curricular participation.

It is not the aim here to compare the draft Tasmanian standards to Danielson, merely to indicate that similar work published some eight years prior to the functional analysis in question did not

appear to have been integrated into the developmental process; if it was, it was certainly not acknowledged. Apart from some minor references, it is particularly striking how little research was cited within both the Tasmanian position paper and the subsequent progress report, despite claims of being informed by ‘international and national research’, and ‘analysis of national and international standards’ (Bett 2004, p.1). Claiming to be informed provides scant justification for the reader, and certainly does not encourage leading teachers to analyse the foundations of the process. An explanation for the failure to cite research and other standards and evaluation frameworks may have been a statement in the original Tasmanian position paper that ‘while drawing on the experience and examples of work in Tasmania and elsewhere, the standards framework should be new and embedded in the local context’ (AGQTP Central Hub 2004, p.7).

Examples of not just research but standards procedures in operation can be cited both in Australia and overseas. The certification system conducted by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards would not have to be adopted slavishly and without modification to meet local conditions. However, the fundamental principles of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards analysis could have been identified as another starting point:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

(NBPTS *Early Adolescence/Generalist Standards* 2001, pp.vi-vii).

These principles and the resultant standards have been the subject of more time, research, and input than the two day functional analysis referred to in the Tasmanian experience and represent a rich foundation for broader discussion. It would be worth knowing if the highly accomplished teachers selected for the functional analysis were exposed to or informed of the Danielson and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards work as a theoretical background for their discussion. If the argument was for an Australian rather than foreign based standards system, the Position Paper could have cited the work done by the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT) that adopted a set of standards in 2002. These

standards flowed from a:

national consensus of the profession - teachers - that describes what teachers who are doing their job well should know and do. The AAMT *Standards* are “by the profession, for the profession” (AAMT, 2002).

In the absence of any reference to such literature in the papers presented by the Tasmanian standards team it is not possible to determine whether they considered the research or ignored it. If the latter were the case, then more substantial justification would be required other than the “local context”. Furthermore, the existence of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards statements across all broad subject areas and accessible on the internet could immediately have involved teachers across the state in consideration and discussion of standards which have been drafted by colleague teachers (albeit in another country) which in their own context are applicable to not just ‘outstanding’ teachers but all members of the profession.

The omission of reference to these national and international frameworks suggests that those active in the Tasmanian standards either do not value the efforts of teachers for teachers or are unaware of them. With the absence of a serious review of literature and research on standards, participants may also be unaware that the processes they are seeking to establish in Tasmania could be exactly those which will engender at the minimum cynicism, and at most fear, amongst teachers. The accountability provisions involving assessment and recognition (or non-recognition) by a single body representing all ‘stakeholders’, including principals and employers, but excluding practising members of the profession from other than token participation, cannot help but raise teacher concerns. Even more surprising is that the recommendations of the position paper both called for a unitary body to oversee standards, and also stated that ‘the teaching profession should be responsible for, and fully engaged in, the development and endorsement of the framework’ (AGQTP Central Hub 2004, p.4). The reality was that teachers were allowed token consultation as others developed their standards, and then are expected to feel satisfied as application of such standards are handed off to another body that would represent not the profession, but those who control each individual’s employment.

Relationship to Teacher Registration

The Tasmanian Teachers Registration Board (TRB) was identified as a key stakeholder member of the *Hub*, and was invited by it to ‘consider how it could be involved in the development, management and use of Tasmanian Professional Teaching Standards, as part of

its legislated function to develop and improve professional teaching standards' (AGQTP Central Hub 2004, p.4). Concurrent with the Tasmanian standards developments, the Teachers Registration Board was renewing registered teachers either on the basis of completed professional development or *ongoing competence* (TRB 2003a) (Appendix 15). The renewal provision (14. (2)) in the *Teachers Registration Act 2000* assented to in December of that year required that the application for renewal be 'accompanied by satisfactory evidence of – (i) ongoing competence; or (ii) professional development undertaken'. This translated into a process where teachers either listed their professional development activities verified through the employer, or simply certified themselves as ongoing competent by virtue of their employment, and with no evidence of disciplinary proceedings or redeployment for unsatisfactory performance (TRB 2003a). Evidence or explanation was only required where a problem had occurred or a teacher had not been employed in a school in 2003-2004.

Teachers could choose either ongoing competence or professional development, not both. Thus completion of professional development or employment at the time of re-registration meant that the Teachers Registration Board was *de facto* certifying the competence of all renewing teachers for periods of up to three years in advance based on no objective measure. Because failure to comply with the Act effectively denies a teacher employment, regardless of the standard of their work performance, and by implication deems them not ongoing competent, the teacher registration process in Tasmania is essentially a punitive and anti-professional procedure. The Teachers Registration Board had attempted to come to grips with this issue involving participation from various school sectors at a couple of meetings in 2002. However, it was not advanced by the time of the first formal renewal process in 2004. Consequently, in 2003, the Teachers Registration Board accepted monetary payment as the only renewal provision. A fee thus equated to competence under the Act (TRB 2003b). The resultant message sent to teachers by the Board was that the power to determine whether they were fit to teach was divorced from the reality of the classroom, and more concerned with collection of funds and bureaucratic survival. The *Hub* examining professional teaching standards failed to note this distinction or teachers' reactions to the Teachers Registration Board, because the *Hub* was itself a bureaucratic entity existing outside the profession, and telling teachers what to do rather than engaging them effectively in the issue of real teaching standards and the improvement of pedagogy where it counts, in the classroom. Ramsey said as much when he noted that

Registration, by itself, is a relatively blunt instrument for guaranteeing and enhancing the quality of teaching. Registration can only imply minimal

standards and is primarily concerned with regulating who should be able to teach, and who should remain in the profession. Compulsory registration virtually requires everyone employed in any teaching capacity to be registered. It rarely prevents ineffective teachers from being employed, and because of its static nature, contributes little to the on-going improvement of the profession (Ramsey 2000, p.149).

Unresolved Issues

Notably, the term *competence* was used by both the members of the *Hub* and the Teachers Registration Board, without any definition or examination of the complexities of the term. The statement by Armiger (1981) that ‘No conclusive research exists that determines what characteristics of the teacher leads to learning on the part of the student’, was followed up by the important work on competence by Bridges (1986) who noted that ‘there are no clear cut-off points which enable the administrator to say with certitude that a teacher is incompetent’ (Armiger 1981, p.297. See also Bridges 1986, p.24). Shanker (1996) further cautioned that issues of competency must also take into account the quality of the managerial function under which the teacher operates, amongst other variable factors. If the “highly accomplished” teachers were indeed selected by Principals as the “key stakeholders” in the Tasmanian standards process, it would be interesting to know if the competence of those doing the selection had been verified in the first place.

Whilst the construction of standards is to be praised as starting at the right end of the evaluation process, mention of accountability in the position paper raised all of the issues of purposes of evaluation, and formative versus summative evaluation. Quite clearly, the structure of the *Hub* and bureaucratic derivation of the standards suggests an accountability rather than professional quality enhancement motivation. This is further strengthened by the need of the Teachers Registration Board to adopt a more scientific procedure for re-registration and to facilitate its function stated in the Act as ‘to develop and improve professional teaching standards’ (Teachers Registration Act 2000, 6(e)). If the problem of reconciling the two aims is not raised and adequately resolved then it is more probable that Tasmanian teachers will end up with a set of standards to which teachers will conform for purposes of survival and job maintenance rather than the improvement of teaching (Ramsey 2000, p.119). As Kleinhenz and Ingvarson noted, not only have most ‘teacher evaluation systems...failed to solve this dilemma. They have also failed to provide genuine guarantees of quality’ (Kleinhenz et al. 2002, p.4).

Conclusion

The most probable outcome of the Tasmanian standards process would be an appraisal system similar to that in operation in England. This would meet the accountability agenda to some extent. However, in making it an imposed system rather than a professionally owned and conducted process, the outcome is likely to be conformity and compliance rather than true enhancement of teacher quality. Furthermore, the weakness of the proposals is also reflected in no mention of any formative process or professional development. The reason for this is, once again, the accountability agenda. Because teachers will be measured and registered, it is assumed that standards will be met and maintained. The reality is that teaching standards, evaluation, and professional development are much more complex as this research has suggested. However, for the bureaucracy, the achievement of the implementation of a system be it flawed or incomplete becomes an end in itself, just as in the threshold assessment in England where unrealistic time frames were imposed to get the measure through before an election (Menter et al. 2002, pp.3, 5). In the worst case, teachers will react negatively, and withdraw into classroom isolation and public compliance, further retarding the cause of reflective professional evaluation, and professional development targeted at real classroom needs, rather than management direction or individual whim.