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Becher's paper sets out the experience of English teacher education since 1944. It indicates the current form of government control in England and the shift to school-based teacher education which, when combined with competency standards, may be seen as a reversion to an apprenticeship model. Beazley (1993, p. 8) states

The Government ... would not support an apprenticeship model for teacher education teacher education is not antithetical to a competency-based approach. Of utmost importance, is ensuring that the issue of competency standards is widely debated throughout the profession.

This special issue is a contribution to that debate.

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COMPETENCY STANDARDS IN TEACHING: TWO PROBLEMS – ONE SOLUTION

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Movement towards competency standards in teaching promises to bring together two parallel programs of reform: school improvement and skills formation. The first of these, school improvement, has a history as long as the history of schooling. In recent decades, proposals for school improvement have led to changes in curriculum content, materials and structure; assessment; architecture; and governance of schools. Throughout these changes, teachers' classroom practices have been remarkably durable and characterised by a few common practices (Cuban, 1988). According to the North American literature, such characteristics include the following:

- teachers 'out-talk' students by a 3:1 ratio;
- teachers provide little corrective feedback to students;
- teachers devote little time to questioning of any sort and almost no time to open questions that call for complex and emotional responses;
- whole-class instruction predominates, with almost no independent, small-group, or cooperative work by students;
- emotions rarely appear in classrooms
- there is little praise, enthusiasm, or intensity of any sort. Classrooms are emotionally neutral, affectless places.

(Sykes, 1988, p. 461; see also Sirotnik, 1983 and Goodlad, 1984.)

These teaching practices are judged to be insufficient to meet the educational challenges of the post-modern era, and so educational reformers have now turned their attention to improving schools by focusing on what teachers know and do. Various levers of change have been proposed, including changes to pre-service and in-service education, teacher registration, career structures and pay for performance. What these proposals have in common is a conviction that the education profession should be more explicit about what teachers know and do, and about what teachers might need to know in order to act differently.

In Australia, this international concern about the knowledge and skill of teachers has been connected with a second program of reform, represented by the skills formation policy and guide-lines issued by the National Training Board (NTB). Whereas the school reform movement is characterised by decades of debate about the nature of the problem, a history of many attempts and a few successes, and an ecumenical view of possible solutions, the skills formation movement arrives as a complete and internally consistent view of the problem and the solution. The problem, in the words of the NTB, is "the need to build an economy which will be internationally competitive into the next century" and the solution is "a national standards system ... that ... should lead to an effective, efficient, responsible and coherent national vocational education and training system" (NTB, 1991, p. 4). Although the NTB was initially established to set national skill standards "for occupations from entry to para-professional level" (Dawkins, 1989, p. 17), more recent NTB publications propose that the National Competency Standards also apply "in the professions and executive management" (NTB, 1991, p. 12). Such competency standards, the NTB argues, should closely relate to industrial awards and should encompass the role of the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition which is encouraging the development of competency standards in the professions.

As these two sets of reform collide, competency standards are likely to be central to the 1990s Australian quest for school improvement. The common thread which connects the reforms is that both skills formation and school improvement focus attention on performance: how well do people need to perform, what do they need to know, and what training is necessary to bring them up to the required standard. The question for education, however, is what conception of 'standards' will allow teaching to take its place in the National Competency Standards system and contribute to the broader agenda of school improvement?

This paper explores two alternative forms of competency standards — case-based standards and behavioural descriptor-based standards.

Behavioural descriptor-based standards, it is suggested, may meet the narrow requirements of the skills formation agenda but are unlikely to make a positive contribution to the school improvement process. Case-based standards, on the other hand, are consistent with both the skills formation and school improvement agendas. Work in progress commissioned by the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning includes both case-base standards (Louden, 1992; Louden & Wallace, 1992) and behavioural descriptor-based standards (Eltis and Turney, 1992; Hughes & Radford, 1992).

BEHAVIORAL DESCRIPTOR-BASED STANDARDS

Although the school improvement and skills formation reforms are just now coming together in Australian education, behavioural descriptor-based descriptions of competence have flourished in American education for more than two decades. As early as 1968, the US Office of Education supported development of competency-based training programs of teacher education (Tuxworth, 1989). Following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Education, 1983), these analyses of the competencies required to teach have been very influential in the development of standards for certification of teachers and for teachers' movement through career ladders. The North Carolina Career Ladder (Holdzkom, 1987), for example, uses an approach to teacher performance appraisal based on behavioural descriptors. This system identifies eight major functions of teaching - management of instructional time, management of student behaviour, instructional presentation, instructional monitoring of student performance, instructional feedback, facilitating instruction, communicating within the educational environment and performing non-instructional duties - and some 38 practices within these eight functions. Levels of performance are reported on a numerical rating scale of 1-6, where 1 represents an unsatisfactory performance, 3 represents an adequate standard, and 6 represents consistently superior performance. Figure 1 (below) provides an example of the practices associated with one function: instructional feedback.

5. Major Function: Instructional Feedback

- 5.1 Teacher provides feedback on the correctness or incorrectness of in-class work to encourage student growth.
- 5.2 Teacher regularly provides prompt feedback on assigned out-of-class work.
- 5.3 Teacher affirms a correct oral response appropriately, and moves on.
- 5.4 Teacher provides sustaining feedback after an incorrect response or no response by probing, repeating the question, giving a clue or allowing more time.

Figure 1: Teaching Functions and Practices North Carolina Teacher Performance Appraisal System (Holdzkom, 1987)

In Australia, a similar procedure has recently been developed for the nursing profession. The Australasian Nurse Registering Authorities Conference (ANRAC) sponsored a major research project which investigated the competencies used by nurses and developed an assessment process based on these competencies (ANRAC, 1991). For Registered Nurses, 78 separate competencies were identified in 18 domains. Each of the competencies is matched by an elaborate assessment technology consisting of a behavioural description of the standard, a set of sources of evidence, and a set of cues which provide concrete illustrations of the competency. Figure 2 (below) describes the assessment standard for one of the 78 ANRAC competencies.

The North Carolina standards for teaching and the Australasian standards for nursing share the strengths and weaknesses of behavioural descriptor-based standards of competence in general. The strength they share is that by describing the behaviour and identifying a standard of performance they make more explicit the knowledge required by practitioners. In principle, at least, this ought to simplify the task of preparing prospective members of the profession, registering nurses and teachers as eligible for employment, inducting neophytes, and providing for supervision of experienced members of the profession.

8.2 Assess effectiveness of nursing care in achieving planned outcomes

Verbal description of standard:

Consistently, accurately and comprehensively assesses effects of care at appropriate intervals.

Sources of Evidence:

Observation of interventions supported by interview of candidate to establish motivations for actions.

Cues:

Compares actual response to expected response and makes judgements about the appropriateness of nursing assessment, relevance of planned nursing care and effectiveness of implemented care. This involves both the continuing assessment and the assessment following particular actions/interventions or identification of change, e.g.:

- checks comfort after repositioning;
- assesses level of pain relief after analgesia;
- checks effects of anti-anginal medication;
- checks individual, who has gastrostomy, for diarrhoea / weight gain.

This may be done independently or interdependently.

Figure 2: Sample Nursing Competency ANRAC Nursing Competencies Assessment Project

The weakness such schemes share, however, is the risk that they "literally analyse competence to bits" (Woolfe, 1980). That is, in an attempt to be specific and concrete about the elements of work tasks, such systems may degenerate into check-lists of occupational skills. Does the teacher affirm the correct oral response as appropriate? Does the nurse check comfort after repositioning? It is for this reason that 'Competency-Based Standards in the Professions', a research paper commissioned by National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition concluded that:

a narrow, behaviouristic approach of this kind is unlikely to be appropriate for defining and assessing professional competence, and [we] recommend instead an approach to competency-based assessment in the professions based on realistic, complex workplace problems. (Masters and McCurry, 1990, p.1)

REALISTIC, COMPLEX WORKPLACE PROBLEMS

Rather than a detailed task analysis and a comprehensive list of individual competencies, Masters and McCurry recommend an approach based on "realistic, complex workplace problems". Among the first steps in developing such an approach is an attempt to answer the question: What kinds of workplace problems do teachers solve? A practical example may help to illuminate this question.

This example comes from the work of Johanna, a teacher of art, music and drama to children in Year 7 and 8 (see Louden, 1991). Her room is the school's art room. The walls are covered with students' art work. On this particular day the art desks were pushed back to the walls and the stools were grouped in a circle for a guitar lesson. At the beginning of the lesson Johanna stood at the front of the room with her marks book in her hand. She called students' names from the class list and one by one, students collected their guitars and returned to their stools. As students sat down, Johanna made sure that no-one sat outside the circle. When she was satisfied, she handed out the song sheets and began the lesson:

OK, I am going to teach you a fun bit now. We are going to go back to the first chord we learned, D. Is there anybody who needs help remembering D? OK, finger 1, string 3, fret 2. Finger 2, string 1, fret 2. Finger 3, string 2, fret 3. So, we'll play five strings, 1, 2 ready to strum, strum.

After re-teaching D to a few students, she went on:

OK, this song has a really nice beginning and it involves putting your pinkie down in the third fret on string 1, at the same time as playing D. So listen to what I do. I play: D, D, new chord, D. When I say "new chord" put your pinkie down on string 1.

They practiced several times. At the end of each try, Johanna said "Good for you", or "So good for people who are just learning to play guitar." When she spotted a kid who was not fingering properly she said, "Brenden, can you reverse fingers 1 and 2, they are upside down." After a few runs through she moved on to the second skill to be taught in the lesson.

Listen to how the whole thing goes. You are going to impress the pants off anyone who plays guitar.

She played the chord change she had just taught, four times. First she played it in the second fret, then the fourth, then the seventh and then again in the second. Impressed, several students called out "OK" or "All right" in appreciation.

That's what you are going to learn to do. You can do it, believe me. You are not doing anything different, you are just gliding it along in different frets. Easy, eh? Try it in the second fret. [Plays] Slide them to the fourth fret, slide them to the seventh fret. Listen to it, it should be like this. [Plays] Try that. And now back to the second fret. Ready, and... [Plays]. Lets practice it again.

Having played it through once without instruction, Johanna asked for volunteers who would like to show off. Jack volunteered — something he would never do in an academic subject — played, and finished with a grin of triumph on his face. After each student finished, Johanna said "Good!" or "You are almost there" or "Pretty impressive!" and then went on to explain how the person could improve the sound, by fretting the D in the correct fret or pressing harder or by cutting her nails. Perhaps half of the class played individually and then Johanna decided to have the whole class play together again. She noticed that not everyone could keep up so she said, "Lets do it again, slower."

After several practices at increasing speed, the class was ready to look at the song sheet. Johanna pointed out that there were a few chords that people wouldn't know, but they should ignore those and play the ones they knew. She led the class through the chorus first, singing and calling chord changes. After they have been right through it once, a late-comer arrived.

Johanna Shall we see if we can impress Rob?

Students Yes!

Johanna OK, hold on to your pants, Rob. 1, 2, 3, 4.

They played through the introduction with the chord change Johanna taught at the beginning of the lesson. In the next stage of the lesson, Johanna lead the class right through the song. When students got to the last verse, which includes several chords most students did not know, she kept playing as the students dropped out and joined in with her singing. As they finished their first run through, students were beaming with satisfaction and calling out, "All right!" and "We did the whole song!"

So, what does Johanna need to *know* to teach this lesson? One way of describing what she needs to know begins by distinguishing between 'content knowledge' and 'pedagogical content knowledge' (Shulman, 1986). In this lesson, Johanna's content knowledge of music includes her method of naming the strings, frets and fingers; the knowledge of chord structure which allows her to substitute the chord she calls 'the new chord' - D suspended 7th - for the more difficult chord of G in this introductory lesson; and her modest folk guitar playing and singing skills.

The pedagogical content knowledge required to teach this lesson is quite subtle and complex. Teaching twenty lively adolescents to play guitar simultaneously requires a teacher to solve an elaborate set of practical problems. Her routine for distributing guitars is designed to prevent the lesson beginning with the chaos of untutored 12-year-olds pretending to be rock stars. Her method of singing over the group while playing a loud steel stringed guitar allows her sound to dominate the group, so that students have the feeling that they are playing the song long before they could do so unaccompanied. Her method of stopping the group to ask individual students to "show off" allows less advanced players to hear and see what they are learning to do. This lesson also required pedagogical content knowledge of children's ages and stages. Johanna's experience has taught her that at 12 years of age many students are afraid to sing or learn to play in from of their classmates. So, the effusive praise she offers — "this class is so fast" — which seems to apply to every class at the time she says it, is a kind of teaching trick. It's not that she is not genuinely pleased, but that the accuracy of the encouragement is much less important to her than the fact of the encouragement. Finally, in this quick survey of the pedagogical content knowledge on display in this lesson, Johanna needs to know how to teach this content in the particular context of her school which serves a community of professionals and artists. The ethos of the school strongly emphasises students' independence, autonomy and creativity. Johanna does not want to have to be authoritarian about the need to be silent when she is giving an explanation, nor does she want to have to badger and remind students, but she must have complete silence while she is tuning, demonstrating or making a point. The basic lesson structure of playing a steel string guitar — louder than the nylon strings of most student guitars — singing loudly over the students, calling the chord changes, and sitting students in a physically tight circle means that she gets the attention she needs without having to badger students.

Unlike teachers in the flat, uninteresting and emotionally neutral classrooms described by Sykes (1988), Johanna is plainly a very competent teacher. The next section of this paper considers the question: What kinds of standards would be required to capture and promote such competence?

Case-based Standards

Historically, teaching has been a professionally isolated craft. Teachers work on their own in the presence of groups of children but rarely in the presence of other equally skilled adults. Because the teaching profession has not typically attempted to make explicit the knowledge teachers share, teaching has sometimes been thought to lack the kind of rigorous professional knowledge held by medical and legal practitioners (Lortie, 1975; Jackson, 1968). Consequently, the knowledge teachers have and use often seems entirely a matter of personal taste. Johanna's solutions to the problem of whole-class guitar teaching certainly reflect her personal experience and build on her deeply felt convictions about what counts as quality education, but in the absence of case evidence about how other teachers solve similar problems it is not clear where her professional knowledge ends and personal taste begins. Nor is it clear whether teaching a whole-class guitar lesson counts as a work-place problem worth assessing. It may seem relatively simple to name the fundamental work-place teaching problems in particular teaching contexts — how to teach latitude and longitude in junior secondary social studies; how to help students overcome their fear of starting a major piece of writing in English; how to teach simultaneous equations in three unknowns in algebra — but it is not clear which such problems are sufficiently fundamental or typical to become the basis of assessment of competence to teach.

If competency standards in teaching are to follow the direction set for Australian professions by Masters and McCurry, the focus will be on assessment of complex work-place problems such as those solved by Johanna in her guitar lesson. Rather than tie competence to behavioural descriptors which 'analyse competence to bits', such standards would tie competence to specific case-based examples of competent professional practice.

Although it will never be possible to define standards for the most important and complex

areas of professional practice in a very precise and unambiguous way (Masters and McCurry, 1991, p.32), the goal of being more explicit about what counts as competent performance is an important task for the teaching profession. Based on a better elaborated case literature which defines work-place problems which are worthy of assessment and provides extended accounts of the range of methods competent practitioners use to solve those problems, it ought to be possible to define some global standards of competence for the profession. In setting such standards it will be essential to take a pluralistic view of what counts as a competent solution to common work-place problems. Johanna's whole-class guitar lesson was not the only possible way of overcoming her particular set of teaching problems. Many of the most fundamental teaching problems, such as teaching young children to read, have been solved in a very wide range of teaching practices and no one theory of teaching can be demonstrated to be wholly superior to any other. As in the legal profession, it must be emphasised that circumstances alter cases.

Conclusions

This paper has argued that competency standards for teaching constitute one solution to two separate problems: school improvement and skills formation. The short-term need for teaching to fit into a definition of the problem as international economic competitiveness and the solution as a set of national standards for skills formation ought not lead the teaching profession to accept the kind of narrow teachers' tests which have emerged in the United States during the mid-eighties. The unprofessional and de-skilling process of fracturing professional action into technical tasks which can be marked on a behavioural check-list will not contribute to the solution of education's larger problem, the problem of school improvement through re-skilling and renewal of the teaching profession. Nor will it sit easily with the current patterns of pre-service and in-service teacher education.

Case-based standards, which capture the richness and complexity of, for example, Johanna's professional practice may more easily contribute to the agenda of school improvement. Provided that competency standards for teachers are based on realistic, complex workplace problems, the competency-based skills formation initiatives may be consistent with attempts to build the professional status of Australian teachers. In time, they may be useful in supporting training

and induction of new teachers, in professional development of experienced teachers and in distinguishing among teachers at the point of career progress to advanced or master teacher roles. However, if competency standards are expected to contribute to solving both the school improvement problem and the skills formation problems in Australia, the process of developing these standards must build a body of case evidence describing what teachers already know and are able to do.

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SELECTED PROFESSIONS OBSERVED: COMPETENCY-BASED STANDARDS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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INTRODUCTION: THE MACRO CONTEXT

The emphasis on competency-based standards (CBS) approaches to reform in teaching is the single most significant trend current in Australian education and in the professions generally today. The pressure for reform has come from industry, unions and government, and to a significantly lesser extent from the professions and parents. While there have been some reservations expressed about CBS among some sections of the Commonwealth bureaucracy in recent months, the idea of competency-based standards remains the overarching schema for micro-economic reform. The dominant press for reform can be attributed to federal (and state) interests and the policy-makers, who for largely economic or economic rationalist reasons recognise the importance of creating a multi-skilled and flexible workforce to produce (ultimately) a 'clever country'.

The impetus for reform is 'driven' by a metapolicy described as corporate federalism (Lingard, 1991; Bartlett, Knight and Lingard, 1992) which along with macro economic reform provides strategies such as CBS for the micro restructuring of work in occupations and the professions. This metapolicy has its origins in the documents *Skills for Australia* (Dawkins and Holding, 1987) which has been translated for the teaching profession into *Strengthening Australia's Schools* (Dawkins, 1988b). The succession of events focussing on different sectors of education and primarily driven by administrative concerns may be seen in the Green (Dawkins, 1987) and White Papers (Dawkins, 1988a) for higher education, the paper on *Teacher Quality* (1989), the *Report on Teacher Education in Australia* (Ebbeck Report) (1990), the national curriculum (AEC, 1989) and Schools Councils documents on *Australia's Teachers* (1990) (which does not mention CBS but is nevertheless about CBS). There are three interlocking themes that recur in these documents. They are the quality of teachers' work, the reorganisation and improvement of teachers' work, and preparation for teachers' work.

This brief paper is written in a context (a) where the National Project for Quality Teaching and Learning (NPQTL) aims to find constructive links among these three themes and; b) the NPQTL has taken measures in the past twelve months to give meaning to the concept of professional competence. This is reflected in the most recent commission to three groups in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia to develop, in a thoroughly untested form, competencies for teachers entering the profession.

While it was understood originally that groups from business, unions and the government alone would have the capacity to implement CBS, this has not occurred. Despite the strong influence of the National Training Board, which has produced a national standards framework (1991), the development of standards relating to paraprofessionals (levels seven and eight) in the teaching profession has been left to NPQTL. This situation has persisted despite the activities of the National Skills Formation Council with its production of this Australian Vocational Certificate Training System (Carmichael Report, 1992), and the publication of the Finn (1991) and Mayer (1992) Committees Reports.

The drive to CBS is being articulated and funded through a range of agencies such as the National Office for Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR), the National Advisory Committee on Skills Recognition (NACSR), the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Advisory Committee (VEETAC), and the Commonwealth State Committee on Regulatory Reform (Bartlett, 1992a; 1992b). All these groups are agents of implementation in a reform 'process'.

This paper deals with aspects of competency and CBS, and focusses upon what is currently known about competencies in selected professions and their applications to the teaching profession (Masters and McCurry, 1990). The paper first reviews the ideas of competency and competence, and competency-based schemes noting the distinction between the more behavioural/performance and the attributional/intention conceptions of competence. This is followed by a brief review of competency-based schemes in