Selected Professions Observed: Competency-Based Standards and Their Implications for the Teaching Profession

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and induction of new teachers, in professional development of experienced teachers and in distinguishing among teachers at the point of career progression 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. Skills for Australia (CBS, 1990) provides a meta-policy for the classrooms 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) governments and the policy-makers, who for largely economic or economic rationalist reasons recognize the importance of creating a multi-skilled and flexible workforce to produce (ultimately) a 'clever country'.

The impetus for reform is 'driven' by a meta-policy 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 meta-policies 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 focusing 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 (Ebebeck 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...
several professions with a longer discussion about the research and implementation of competencies in the nursing professions. The issues identified in that research are discussed in the context of teacher education. The paper argues for the relevance of a competency-based scheme that promulgates standards whilst serving the need for making more explicit the nature of competencies of a beginning teacher.

The paper is an updated version of one of the first papers commissioned by the NPTQL.

**COMPETENCY-BASED STANDARDS**

The concepts of competency and standards have a variety of meanings in the literature. The sense in which the term competency is used in this paper follows from the analysis of competencies in the Nursing Competencies Assessment Project (NCAP) which developed competencies for beginning nurses (Butler, Alavi, Bartlett et al., 1991). In this research, the definitions of competency and competence had the following meanings:

**Competency:** a definable knowledge/skill/attitude or attribute made explicit in work (action) and attained in social contexts to a defined standard through practice, study and personal interactions.

**Competence:** the ability/capacity to work (act) effectively as judged against established or known standards and encompassing intellectual, cognitive and attitudinal dimensions. Competence is based on knowledge and specific field (for example, teaching) and context, and is constituted of a set of separate competencies, units or domains considered at once and/or globally.

**Standard:** the level of achievement of a competency in action; that is, the ‘performance’ level of a specific professional practice. Standards represent what is known or what is desirable.

There are several distinctions that may be made between competency and competence. While it is not the purpose of this paper to explicate these differences, they refer to focus (restricted or wideranging), adaptability in practice, content dependence, transferability and others. The differences, of course, will relate to the knowledge-base one theorises about competence and hence competency.

A competent professional is a person who has or demonstrates competence across the whole range of competencies applicable to the profession at a standard (author emphasis) that is judged to be appropriate for the level of professional, for example, the beginning teacher or the extended/expert professional teacher who is being assessed. Hence CBS focuses on attributes, performance and standards (CBS, 1990).

Competency represents what is known or what is desirable. These definitions of competency and competence conceivably as an intentional form of action in social contexts relates to how one conceives the theory-practice relationship. In this research, the notion of knowledge is applied to behaviours as opposed to the expression of competency/competence in or through action; and the narrow focus on knowledge underlying workplace (employment) competencies as opposed to the broader knowledge base of competence involving professional, pedagogical, subject-specific and personal knowledge.

The NOOSR definition of competence, while emphasizing attributes, skills and knowledge, similarly relies on a more psychologistic if not behavioural view of performance. It states:

> The competence of professionals derives from their professional attribute set of relevant attributes such as knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes. These attributes which jointly underlie competence are often referred to as competencies. So a competency is a combination of attributes underlying some aspect of successful professional performance.

**COMPONENTS OF A COMPETENCY-BASED SCHEME**

A brief comment is presented here to lead the reader into some appreciation of the nature of CBS ‘models’ or schemes. The material is taken from the NCAP Report (Butler, Alavi, Bartlett et al., 1990). In this report the following statements are made: (p.1-2):

> In curriculum terms, the effect of a competency-based model is to focus on the specification of educational outcomes rather than learning processes. The intention of the model is to furnish greater clarity and orientation to the providers of the educational processes. The implementation of the model requires a profound curriculum change if the previous situation was exclusively based on knowledge and skill components. However, it is often found that parts of the full model are often already operating in many institutions.

And again (p.1):

> in a competency-based model, students are accredited when they are able to demonstrate that their performance meets the standards on each of the competencies promulgated by the registering authorities. The means by which the competencies have been acquired is of secondary importance.

The CBS model has a national appeal more perhaps to the statutory and political groups and policy-makers identified in the introduction of the paper than to practitioners and educators. However, it has also been noted that:

(i) the efficacy of CBS schemes is unsupported by research evidence (Tuxworth, 1989);

(ii) there is a move to CBS models in the professions internationally although, as Tuxworth (1989:20) again notes, the effects of the inceptus of the model have been minimal.

It is relevant to note also the significantly failed attempts to introduce the model to education in the 1960’s. The problem of identification and measurement of outcomes reduced the model to more simple forms of mastery learning based on behavioural objectives.

Hager, et al. (1990) outlines three approaches to CBS. They are:

(i) performance approaches;

(ii) attributes approaches;

(iii) integrated approaches.

The categorisation is rejected in this paper for the following reasons:

a) It assumes a theoretical notion of performance/task as behaviour which is not necessarily the case. Performance can be conceived in terms of intentional action in social context.

b) Attributes (knowledge, skills) are separated from performance, representing a knowledge-action, theory-practice dichotomy.

An amalgamation of a) and b) lacks a sound theoretical basis.


It should be remembered that any CBS scheme is relatively complex. All schemes must have four principal components in professional education.

(i) Identification of competencies: A list of competencies must be identified/established for professional accreditation (Gonczi, Hager and Oliver, 1990).

(ii) Specification of standards: standards must be specified for each of the competencies.

(iii) Program construction: an educational program must be designed to assist individuals or professionals to perform at the standards on each of the competencies.

(iv) Development of assessment technologies: methods of assessment must be developed for the competencies.

What tends to be forgotten especially by policymakers is that:

(a) all components need to be integrated and related to produce a particular kind of CBS;

(b) the separation of (i) and (iv), identification and development, creates a dichotomisation of theory and practice. Any identification of the competencies should involve their assessment in situ/natural settings;

(c) the identification of competencies (i) can represent statements about national standards. Competency statements reflect standards. Assessment of competencies is one means of promoting standards;

(d) a CBS scheme can be used for prognosis or recognition of prior learning. The former is the more useful purpose for entry into the professions;

(e) there are currently only a few approaches which incorporate best aspects of CBS schemes (Bartlett, 1992a; 1992b).

THE PROFESSIONS OBSERVED

A treatment of the movement to CBS in the professions is presented briefly in this section of the discussion. Relevant aspects applicable to teaching are included in the issues section of this paper. It might be noted at the outset that the idea of professions and their classification is not unproblematic. Hager, Gonczi and Oliver (1990) offer a detailed analysis of professions although their categorisation of professions according to approaches to questions on their professional identity and career life is not without its 'critique'. Nevertheless, the following six professional groups were investigated by means of document analysis and (to a limited extent) by telephone surveys for reporting in this paper. The professions selected for analysis at the time of original production of this paper (June, 1991) were those professions which had completed some work on competency-standards.

Since the time of first writing this paper, twenty professions have been supported by NOOSR in their development of competency standards according to guidelines required by DEET through NOOSR (1992) for the projects it funds. A more detailed analysis of these initiatives is forthcoming in Bartlett (1993). The following material represents an update on six professions with some general comments about the first five professions' initiatives and their application to the teaching profession. Developments in the nursing profession are discussed at length because they are seen to be more relevant to teaching.

1. The Law Profession

In Australia, the work of Ayling and Constanzo (1984) has represented this profession's principal endeavour to establish competencies. The outcome of this work is:

- the identification of fifteen skills in four global areas ('domains');
- the combination of these (post facto) with attitudes.

With respect to licensing, there is no national mechanism to recognise any competencies that have been identified. The Law Council of Australia is not involved; it encourages reciprocal recognition among the admission authorities in each state and territory. The Consultative Committee for States and Territories under New South Wales Justice Priestley has noted the absence of a national set of competencies for the profession and has some interest in the area. There is some indication that state admission authorities have strong held views that are protective of their own (state) interests; and that they do not have a national perspective on competencies for the profession. The teaching profession similarly has no set of competency statements nor a national professional body. The question as to whether the latter should have an accrediting and registering function is of course a topic of vigorous debate.

There are several features of work in the legal profession that might be noted:

- In the profession's approach represented in the above work of Ayling and Constanzo, there is a dichotomy in thinking about skills and attitudes, a dichotomy comparable to a separation between theory and practice.
- Learning about competencies is separated from their assessment.
- Focussing on general areas of competencies ('domains') offers little to link appraisal for professional development.
- The national body offers little prospect for a national set of competencies. Furthermore, indications are that law may adopt a prolegomenal professional position without appreciating the possible useful knowledge acquired in developing competencies.
- Competencies have not been tested/validated in the workplace, against what is actually done among practitioners in the profession.

The law profession at this time appears to have little to say to the teaching profession about constructive links among practice, its improvement and teacher career structures.

2. The Medical Profession

When we draw lessons for teaching from other professions, we must take into account the conditions under which these other professions are practised. Teaching is a more politically and more sensitive public activity than what is witnessed in other professions. It has little to learn from the medical profession. This viewpoint is stated despite Hager, Gonczi and Oliver's (1990) assertion that the "integrated approach" to CBS with its three-dimensional model (Fabb and Marshall, 1984) for the Australian Family Medical Program offers several advantages and no major limitations.

However, when teachers are able to bill insurance companies for services, earn much higher incomes, work with students one at a time, deal with patients who seek their help, be appraised in terms of process rather than outcomes, afford to pay lawyers to defend their practice, and choose to practise alone or in groups - only then should teaching take a close look at what the medical profession does.

One might also anticipate that the medical profession might be the last profession to make constructive links among the nature of their work, career structure and professional development for improvement. If it does, it will not rely on any government agency support such as that provided by NOOSR. The profession will self-regulate and continue to aggressively control its own future. The exception may be the Royal Australian College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists whose court system has been able to transfer credit points and system and a number of varied programs for professional development.

3. The Engineering Profession

The Institution of Engineers initially produced a document listing 'desirable qualities' in engineers. The Institute required completion of 150 hours of continuing education on a three-year rolling program but this was not related systematically to the careers of engineers or to appraisal for their progress as professionals. In May 1992, the Institution contracted with NOOSR to develop, in consultation with relevant parties, national core competency statements and performance criteria relevant to all disciplines of professional engineers at entry and 'experienced' levels (NACSR, 1992). The task was to be completed by mid December, 1992. The initiative is based on removing workplace barriers preventing non-professionals from bettering their skills to achieve professional status. Competency standards are also expected to be an integral part of future industrial agreements.

The profession is following closely the guidelines for development of competencies (Heywood, Gonczi and Hager, 1992) and producing eleven units' each with five elements. The aim is to produce a national core for all discipline structures and for the workplace. The wide range of discipline structures in Engineering makes the task formidable. The competency standards statements are being prepared for the entry (graduate) and experienced professional. In addition, there is the complexity of producing statements for the different vocational skills and professional levels of competence in engineering. The latter reflects the need for articulation between TAFE and universities. Finally, the current development of competencies adopting a limited consultative process does not consider assessment methodology. One may conclude that the profession has undertaken an extremely ambitious program within a minimal timeframe. The research design and procedures for the development of competencies offer little of value to the teaching profession.
4. The Accounting Profession

The Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants (ASCPA) offered multi-level status for 60 hours' professional development per triennium for 'certified practising accountant' status or 120 hours for specialist member status. This seems less than systematic as a national certificate for recognition of advanced skills and understanding. In February 1992, with the support of NOOSR, ASCPA, and with the involvement of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Australia, commenced a project to develop common competency standards for the profession. The distinctive feature of the project was that it is being conducted as a two-year project with the New Zealand Society of Accountants, itself supported by the New Zealand Education and Training Support Agency. Two other challenging features are that there are at least six to eight specialist fields with the work of the profession very hierarchically organised (novice to expert) and team-based. In addition, the profession acknowledges high levels of change (for example, in capital markets, and laws and regulations). Aspects of design development include questionnaire (Delphi technique) and high levels of consultation. While the project is in a relatively early stage (Birkett 1992a; 1992b, 1992c) there appear to be worthy lessons for the teaching profession.

5. The Pharmacy Profession

Western Australia is the only state with a registration authority (1989) to register pharmacy graduates, using twelve clusters of specific competencies. The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has also produced a set of competencies for Community Pharmacy Practice (David and Jacobs, 1990). This is a long list which focuses on pharmaceutical practice, tasks and roles. At a national level, there has been limited progress (June, 1991) on CBS and some reluctance to proceed since the profession feels that CBS "may be used against them". This is understandable in any Australian profession. It has added 'spike', however, for the pharmacy profession, which sees itself engaged in health care in a context where government intervened and located it in the sphere of commercial activity (through changing Pharmacy fees from the Health Department to the Finance, Industry, Technology and Commerce Department at national level).

Initiatives in Pharmacy offer a number of applications to the teaching profession.

(i) Competencies focussed on practice (tasks and roles).
(ii) The need to derive/validate competencies from and through practice (although the Pharmacy profession has not done this).
(iii) The possibility of setting standards for competencies. (Although Hager, Gonczi and Oliver (1990) indicate the high costs involved, there are alternative strategies such as those observed in the Nursing Profession).
(iv) The possibility of using practice-based competencies linked with initial education programs.

6. The Nursing Profession

The Nursing Profession was the first profession in Australia to:

(i) establish a list of competencies validated from practice;
(ii) specify standards through the use of cues and exemplars (Hager, Gonczi and Oliver's (1990) comment about the ANRAC competencies that they expressed as 'behaviours' is not likely accurate as are a number of their other comments and analysis with respect to recent initiatives in the nursing profession);
(iii) implement an assessment technology (standard-reference testing);
(iv) construct and implement a National Professional Development Program (Bartlett, 1992c).

Perhaps more significant than any one of the four achievements above is the fact that they were all accomplished through a national registration body, ANRAC. [From July 1, 1992 this group was dissolved and the Australian Nursing Council (ANC) established]. In addition, each state retained its own particular view of standards in nursing through its state registering authority. It is anticipated that the ANRAC competencies will be accepted by the National Board of Training, with implications for award restructuring, work reorganisation, professional development, and the redesign of curriculum in Higher Education Institutions where all nurse education will be implemented by 1993.

The ANRAC competencies focus on the competencies of entry nurses who are about to begin nursing; but the list of competency statements might well apply to the 'extended professional' if there was extended validation for professionals at that level.

A few selected implications for and/or applications to the teaching profession include:

i) the promulgation of standards through the assessment of the competencies;
ii) an assessment technology focussing on prognosis for improvement of professional practice;
iii) the ANRAC competencies are used for several purposes:
   a) for overseas skills recognition for nurses;
   b) to reward excellence;
   c) for mobility across states.

The Issue of Skills and Knowledge

A review of CBS in the professions raises the issue of the knowledge-base of competence, the complexity of this knowledge and a broad versus a narrow view of skills. An argument could be made that teacher knowledge is more complex than the knowledge basis for competence in any other profession. This assertion can be supported empirically in the literature and in seminal research such asConnell's (1985) study.

Issues in Applications to the Teaching Profession

Issues are things about which we disagree at different times and conditions of occurrence. A selected number of issues is discussed here to indicate the kind and nature of further work that needs to be addressed in a CBS approach for the teaching profession.

The Issue of Generic and Specific Skills

While many educators (particularly from the discipline of Psychology) have hoped to discover that teaching is a bundle of generic skills applicable across many professions, this kind of search has been generally unproductive. The issue of generic competencies raises many questions, but from the NCAP research it is clear...
The Issue of Teacher Practice and Teacher Work

The concept of work with its attendant discourse of division of labour, work reorganisation, labour processes, outputs and other categories has become the dominant form of discourse applied to paraprofessional and professional occupations in recent years. The origin of the term ‘work’ may be found in specific contexts, and there is always the potential to conceive the concept in terms of a narrowly defined cluster of competencies or skills tied to behavioural forms of workplace performance.

What workers in the teaching profession do, however, has for many years been conceived in terms of the concept of practice. There is a voluminous and scholarly literature on the idea of professional practice which may be improved through a process of reflection. The latter makes possible an exploration of the dual relationships between the individual’s ideas and actions, and the individual and societal concerns. However, practice should not be conceived as a monolithic concept if only because it occurs in different settings (learning arrangements), and in different political, cultural and temporal contexts. Teacher practice has a complexity within which is embedded an accumulated history related to the idea of teaching competence. It also varies from teacher to teacher in their interactions with different groups of learners. Hence, the idea of practice is inherently problematic not only in its meanings but also in the social contexts which give it meaning and in which it is given meaning.

While the largely managerial concerns of the Commonwealth government, about teacher competencies and standards might want to conceive of teachers’ professional practice in terms of industrial and vocational work (Marginson, 1990), there is the potential danger that this conception may dominate our understanding of what teachers actually do. The history of classrooms and pedagogy however, provides clear evidence that teachers can accommodate, distort and reinvent bureaucratic impositions to suit their own purposes. What is needed is not only a close scrutiny of the industrial discourse of work, a discourse that is occurring from macro contexts of policy formulation, but also a critical scrutiny of the concept of professional practice as well as the relationship between work and practice. There is the need for systematic enquiry that focusses on the individual’s ideas and actions, and the individual and societal concerns.

The sense in which the terms ‘work’ and ‘practice’ are used in this literature, however, contrasts with the sense in which the term work is implicitly used in NTB’s document on Competency-Based Standards: Policy and Guidelines (1991) with its focus on vocationalism, tasks and task skills, and needs analysis. The word ‘work’ is conceived in a vocational training sense in publications by Bluer and Carmichael (1991). It assumes that a framework for the implementation of a CBS approach focused on its view of ‘work’ can be applied across the professions; and similarly, that competencies can be identified in a serial way across the same occupations or professions. This blanket application to all professions reflects the increasing dominance of a vocational conception.
of ‘work’ and the application of one competency-based approach for all. The approach lacks an historical consciousness and gives little attention to the historical roots of reform (Zeichner and Liston, 1990). Rather than provide arguments as to why the NBT’s view of competencies should be rejected, it seems more appropriate for the purposes of this discussion and for the NPQTL, to comment on the really useful knowledge signified in the two concepts ‘practice’ and ‘work’ as they are used in an educational sense in the literature of the teaching profession. It is pertinent to indicate that there is no comparably well conceived or larger volume of literature on these two concepts in other professions in Australia.

There are a number of distinctions that might be made between the two concepts and these should be the subject of future analysis. Only two distinctions are discussed here. First, teachers as professional practitioners engage in professional autonomous judgements about their own practice. These judgements relate to the Aristotelian notion of prudence and wise or informed choice (praxis). Hence changing one’s understanding, but also the conditions of practice-work; this might be a need to be undertaken; this might be a priority for NPQTL since it has implications for identifying and assessing teacher competency. It does not have a necessary application for a CBS approach based on that workplace (described in an Australian literature as ‘theorising from practice’). It would be entirely inappropriate to follow an international trend, such as occurs in the US, to establish and assess competencies independently of the workplace. On the other hand, it would be conceptually inadequate to assume that all teacher competencies are ‘tied’ to the workplace. Explicit statements about teacher competencies must be derived from an espoused knowledge-base of the professional teacher.

Finally, the concept of teacher work is essentially an Australian idea emerging from a particular view of the workplace. Any derivation of competencies of teacher-workers must be based on that workplace (described in an Australian literature as ‘theorising from practice’). It would be entirely inappropriate to follow an international trend, such as occurs in the US, to establish and assess competencies independently of the workplace. On the other hand, it would be conceptually inadequate to assume that all teacher competencies are ‘tied’ to the workplace. Explicit statements about teacher competencies must be derived from an espoused knowledge-base of the professional teacher.

The Issue of Being Competent and Proficient

In constructing links between work and career structures for continuing professional development, it is useful to distinguish between being competent in initial teacher education and being proficient, the latter having the idea of being ‘expert’ and ‘making progress’ within a continuing professional education framework.

In the NPQTL study, a distinction was made between the beginning nurse and the extended professional. These stages of development are described in the literature as phases of teacher development ranging from survival to consolidation to maturity and finally to proficiency. The problem is to determine what kinds of competence (often related to forms of licensing, registration or accreditation) are appropriate at the various stages of professional development (Queensland Board of Teacher Registration, 1987).

From the NPQTL study it was proposed that a range of competencies could be identified and assessed at a minimal level of competency. The research was also about the promulgation of standards in the profession. That is, it had a formative aim to promote excellence or quality in nursing practice through a form of assessment known as standard-reference testing (Sadler, 1987). It also had a summative purpose, namely to indicate minimal levels of competence of an entry nurse. While the NPQTL research tended to focus on the validation of competencies in practice with a lesser emphasis on assessment processes, the latter has been reviewed in the National Professional Development Program (NPDP) of nurse professionals in five states (Bartlett, 1992c). The NPDP program indicates that the two aims are not incompatible.
The teaching profession is currently attempting to establish and a mechanism for accreditation, the nursing profession is no national representative group. The teaching profession, unlike the nursing profession does not therefore have a registering authority in every state. The critical issue is that the nursing profession has acted to self-regulate the profession. It has established the Australian Nursing Council (ANC) to replace ANRAC, a group which will:

(a) accredit competency-based standards across states and therefore ensure at least mutual recognition and transferability of qualifications within the professions as a whole;
(b) have the ANRAC competencies acknowledged by the NTB and recognised as a basis for award restructuring and career structures.

The question to be answered is: Is it possible to have a national body without the competencies? However, deregulation still has significant implications for the profession in a national context where there are registering authorities in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland only; Tasmania has a private sector authority and New South Wales a Classifiers Committee of the State Department of Education. The teaching profession has no national representative group.

The above situation refers only to beginning or entry professionals. It does not refer to re-entry or overseas trained professionals who are seeking admission to practice in this country. The kind of assessment for these persons is at state level, i.e. recognition of price learning and not prognosis. This function could be served by a national body.

The teaching profession could:

(i) adopt a similar CBS approach for first-year teachers. The procedures should invest ownership in the profession. In addition, the lessons to be learned from the NCAP research would be lost if these procedures:
(ii) use trained peers, ASTs and persons within the profession to assess competencies;
(iii) establish a national mechanism for purposes of registration of overseas and re-entry professionals and for testing for excellence.
(iv) establish recognised state authorities for purposes of registration and mutual recognition (Queensland Board of Teacher Registration, 1991). Where a state does not do this, the profession is of course in danger of being appropriated by employers.

The principal advantages would be:

a) (ii) would satisfy the Health and Safety criterion required by VEETAC (although there is some doubt about the quality of this group’s decision);

b) the profession would be self-regulating but avoid the dysfunctions of national testing (Fensham, 1980);

c) a monolithic model of CBS would not be imposed nationally but each state could register and interpret (assess) competencies recognising their own teaching and curriculum cultures;

d) the established professional management infrastructure would avoid the necessity of being regulated by a government agency or by a quasi-qualified group such as the Australian College of Education.

IN CONCLUSION

While it may be that NPQTL will now have the capacity to define the meanings of competence and a body of experts in both public and private bodies in business and the unions, it is necessary that the political and policy agenda behind the move to CBS in the profession is made explicit. In talking to professional groups, albeit briefly, in the short time available to write this paper; it was evident that various stakeholders, administrators
and practitioners were nervous and suspicious of the move to CBS.

The teaching profession needs to be politically conscious about the agenda driving the move to CBS, but more professionally informed. This is said in a context where CBS approaches throughout educational history demonstrate a series of failed attempts to impose reform and to control teachers' work. Teachers themselves will be cynical and suspicious if on the one hand documents such as Australia's Teachers argue that teachers' work should be made explicit but on the other hand a monolithic model of CBS imposes further stringent conditions on their work in the process of the latter being made explicit.

Second, unless teacher educators (parents, teachers, university lecturers, faculties of education in universities) are included in the processes of establishing a basis for CBS approach, it is unlikely that any 'partnership' between various groups will be possible. To date there has been a tendency to exclude teacher educators and a greater propensity by DEET, the unions and employers to believe that they have the solutions to problems in the profession.

There is an added difficulty in as much as most CBS approaches focus on prior learning as opposed to prognosis; that is, a standard achievement within an occupation is measured by how well one can perform skills and demonstrate a knowledge for a specific level of achievement or performance rather than the formal qualifications one attains if the vocational training testing which promotes standards in the profession has relevance. Such an approach, initially tested in the development and implementation of competencies in the nursing profession, could clearly apply to beginning teachers. There are implications also for continuing professional education and implementation of competencies in the teaching profession. Inaugural Lecture. University of Central Queensland, Rockhampton.

There are other issues that emerge from a review of selected number of professions and a move to CBS, and in particular, a review of the nursing profession. These issues include the more technological aspects of assessment of competencies. Issues include: assessors as instruments; the question of objectivity and subjectivity; and several others.

The move to a prescriptive behavioural/performance-based CBS generally equated with a vocational-training perspective has only minimal to no relevance for the teaching profession. The adoption of a CBS scheme, however, based on standardized testing which purports to have standards in the profession has relevance. Such an approach, initially tested in the development and implementation of competencies in the nursing profession, could clearly apply to beginning teachers. There are implications also for continuing professional education and profiling for expert teachers or ASts. The development of competencies for the latter is yet to be considered seriously and is more problematic. The need is evident, however, if teacher career structures are to be acknowledged and teacher work is to be reorganised to meet current social and economic change in the workplace and in society.

NOTES
1. The twenty professions currently developing competency standards with the support of NOOSR, as at October 1, 1992 are: accountancy, agricultural science, architecture, chiropractic/osteopathy, dentistry, dietetics, engineering, medical scientists, medical radiations science, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, psychology, social welfare, speech therapy, teaching, and veterinary science.

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