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.

REFERENCES


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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 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) interest in 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 meta-perspective 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 perspective 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 successor to this document is the National Project for Quality Teaching and Learning (NPQTL) which has produced a national standards framework today.

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 para-professionals (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...
There are several distinctions that may be made in the context of teacher education. The paper argues for the relevance of a competency-based model in this area. The paper is an updated version of one of the first papers commissioned by the NPQTL.

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.

Competency is based on knowledge/attribute in a 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 relate to focus (restricted or widening), 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 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 (Hager, 1990).

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); and
(ii) there is a move to CBS models in the professions internationally although, as Tuxworth (1989:20) again notes, the effects of the impetus 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.

c) An amalgam 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 to 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 assessment, might be seen to be 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 diagnosis or recognition of prior learning. The former is the more useful purpose for entry into the professions; and

(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 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 which has a sophisticated credit points system.

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 assessment criteria related 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 important to remove workplace barriers preventing non-professionals from being appointed to the teaching profession about constructive links among practice, its improvement and career structure and professional development for 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 learnt in other professions. It has little to say to 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 personally, see 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 the 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 NOORS, 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. 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.

(i) Competencies focused 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 codes 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, ANRC. 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 focusing 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.

(iv) the recognition of a dialectical relationship between theory and practice;
(v) the possibility of involving collaboratively all persons in the profession including administrators, practitioners and researchers;
(vi) the establishment of competencies and their assessment in an open, democratic and cooperative manner;
(vii) the development of competencies and their self-regulation in the profession;
(viii) the recognition of institutional and state 'cultures' in which the competencies are assessed in context;
(ix) the competencies 'applied' to different nursing settings [The ANRAC competencies were based on acute care settings but the professional development programme in 1991-1992 aimed to allow nurses to test the applicability of competencies for other settings];
(x) the competencies reflecting a body of knowledge or theory which could be used comparatively in the design of nursing curriculum;
(xi) the complexity of knowledge and the ANRAC competencies;
(xii) the complexity of knowledge, the ANRAC competencies and the teaching profession.

The ANRAC competencies offer the teaching profession singularly important applications that will enhance the professional aspects of what teachers do.

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 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 as Connell's (1985) study.

Closer comparisons might be made between the nursing profession (the profession perhaps closest in kind to teaching) and the teaching profession. One view of the kind of micro relationships between forms of knowledge and the clients served is shown diagrammatically in Figure 1.

These selected comparisons suggest that the relationships between skills, knowledge and the practitioner are highly complex in both professions. Yet teaching on a one-to-one basis occurs in changing settings and different disciplines of knowledge with many learning arrangements (even within one classroom) and among many people. At the same time if one were to separate the three components in the figures above the result would be the production of a narrowly conceived skilled technician rather than a reflective professional teacher.

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 the industrial and vocational vocabularies, 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 what teachers actually do, how their actions relate to the ideas of work and practice, and in turn how this is related to the demonstration of high standards of competence.

There are a number of questions that might be asked in the context of this discussion (the list is not exhaustive or comprehensive).

1. What is the conceptual framework upon which a notion of competence can be theorised?
2. What is the nature of workplace competencies and how do they relate to other competencies, for example, those directly associated with personal development qualities?
3. How long will a particular description of competencies and related assessments be valid?
4. What competencies are required for the teacher to be recognised as worker?
5. What minimal standard of competence is needed for teachers to achieve certification as workers in the education industry?
6. What are the minimal standards of competence needed to maintain a continuing certification of status of worker?
7. What standards of competence constitute a notion of excellence for a professional worker/practitioner?
8. How are standards determined in the profession?

The above questions assume a distinction between the use of the concept of practice as has been used in the literature by authors such as Kemmis, Grundy and Bartlett, and the concept of work as it has been written about by Seddon, Marginson, Fordo, Preston and others; and in a different sense, the way it has been described by Hatton who writes about work as bricolage. Both of the concepts are written about in an educational sense in these literatures.

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 could be rejected, it seems more appropriate for the purposes of this discussion and for the NFQTL, 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 decision making. Hence there are complex competencies that are ‘played out’ in educational settings by reflective practitioners. Professional judgements are the product not only of a teacher’s individual understanding of his or her practice but also depend on the object conditions of practice. Hence changing one’s practice and the competencies requires not only the changing of one’s understanding but also the conditions of practice that are understood possible. Many recent policy documents do not address the issue of conditions and context of practice; it appears to be denied or relegated to the “too hard basket”.

The teacher-as-worker in the sense promulgated by Seddon is somewhat less autonomous because of work requirements, and the rules and procedures that NBT’s represent, for example, in duty statements, which are the industrial products of negotiation between unions and employers. The idea of teacher work is governed and limited by these kinds of industrial and quasi-legal views, but they also depend on the material conditions of practice. Hence changing one’s practice and the competencies requires not only the changing of one’s understanding but also the conditions of practice that are understood possible. Many recent policy documents do not address the issue of conditions and context of practice; it appears to be denied or relegated to the “too hard basket”.

A second distinction is the minimalist sense of work, teacher-workers will still engage in praxis in demonstrating their competence, even though the nature of competencies may be more simple than complex. Unions who negotiate and in part define the limitations and constraints on teacher work are especially protective of minimal standards in periods of economic downturn. Conversely, during these same periods employers demand a broader range of competencies at a higher standard of performance. Under more economically volatile and favourable conditions of work, formal certification of their minimalist position may become the advocates of higher standards of performance and the identifiers of complex competencies that indicate excellence, all in the best interests of their members.

The proposition that minimalism provides one distinction between teachers’ work and practice does not suggest that a deficit model of teacher work is being advocated. Much more analysis needs to be undertaken; this might be a priority for NFQTL since it has implications for identifying and assessing teacher competence. It does not have a necessary application for a CBS approach towards assessment. As has been indicated in the brief discussion of other issues in this paper, it is possible to identify a CBS with national testing of teachers. If this occurs, by definition (of the term ‘national’) the lowest common denominator in both identification and assessment of competencies will be sought and this will be compounded by the political and economic struggle by interest groups such as industry and the unions to seek a minimalist interpretation of standards.

The above discussion is in need of critique but it suggests that the NFQTL might:

i) interrogate further the relationships between teacher-practice and teacher-work. Both concepts have recognition in the literature on pedagogy and education, but not in other professions.

ii) enquire into the nature of practice-work through theorising from what teachers actually do. Again, there is a relatively large literature in education on theorising from practice but not within a reconstructed conception of teacher practice work;

iii) analyse implications for the identification and assessment of competencies construed in a minimalist sense. As indicated in another section, this would appear possible from understandings from the NCAP study in workplace (described in a particular reference to beginning teachers entering the culture of teaching, and overseas teachers wishing to access teaching in an Australian culture;

iv) provide a critique of vocational training frameworks and CBS approaches applied to teaching. There is also a need to review critically ‘performance’ based approaches that have some of the attributes described above (Walker, 1990).

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 NCAP study, a distinction was made between the beginning nurse and the extended professional. These stages of development are theorised or conceived 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 or certification, registration or accreditation) are appropriate at the various stages of professional development (Queensland Board of Teacher Registration, 1987).

From the NCAP study it was proposed that a range of competencies could be identified and assessed at a minimal level of proficiency. The research was also about the promulgation of standards in the profession. That is, it had a normative purpose 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 NCAP 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 (NPD) of nurse professionals in five states (Bartlett, 1992c). The NPD program indicates that the two aims are not incompatible.
A first phase of research for the profession is to develop a list of competency statements. In the NCAP research this was achieved by expert nurses or extended professionals; a similar process could be followed in the teaching profession. This procedure incidentally is currently being adopted in the New South Wales Department of the School of Education.

A second phase is to test the competency statements in practice through observation of teachers’ work. The methods to be employed here should be based on what is known in the profession, namely methods based on learning for improvement through action research, clinical supervision and other forms of reflective enquiry.

A third phase requires the validation of competence through sources other than observation of practice. The reports used in practice teaching schools reflect the competencies in action. What is needed is a systematic analysis of these reporting forms to assess whether the list of competencies for beginning teachers exist in practice.

A more appropriate focus might be to concentrate on the probation of beginning teachers in the first year of teaching rather than on the assessment of competencies in initial teacher education programs. Through the processes of peer and system review, appropriate competencies could be assessed for defined standards at minimal levels of competence.

One final issue might be addressed. In the NCAP research, the competencies of beginning teachers were observed in the first three to six months of beginning nursing practice. It may be argued that the competencies of the extended professional and proficient nurse could give a better ‘picture’ of what is expected of the beginning practitioner. In reality, it would probably be more meaningful to conduct research in both areas and determine how the competence of each is related.

The NCAP methodology acknowledged the importance of the workplace, theory-practice relationships and, above all, ownership by the profession of standards in the profession. The critical issue is that the research design and method used should encourage professionalism while acknowledging the legitimate claims of registering authorities. As will be seen in the section on the issue relating to national testing and a mechanism for accreditation, the nursing profession is currently attempting to establish appropriate management infrastructure to ensure that the profession is self-regulating. The teaching profession might well draw upon lessons from the nursing profession and its most recent reforms and initiatives.

While the idea of being competent is appropriate for initial teacher education, the idea of being proficient is more appropriate for the continuing professional education of teachers in particular in relation to the Advanced Skilled Teacher (AST). More complex competencies and combinations of competencies will be involved in making explicit the qualities of ‘expert’ teachers and ASTs. The emergence of consortia in a number of states could support teachers in developing profiles for their task of making explicit their advanced skills and competencies.

The Issue of National Testing vs National Mechanisms

Much of the recent discussions on teacher professionalism and development related to standards and reform has focused on the areas of national standards and national competency standards. Much of the debate has centred on whether national standards should be linked with testing processes such as a competency-based scheme regulated by a national professional body (McCrae, 1992); or whether national standards can be promulgated through a national professional body which acts as a mechanism for teacher development (National Teacher Registration Forum, 1991). This latter kind of agency exists in the US (Porter, 1991).

At a more organisational/structural level, there are a number of options available to license professionals and to support standards in the profession.

(i) Retention of the status quo: no national registering or accrediting body.
(ii) Reciprocity for active professionals: the status of professional experience allows provisional registration in another state.
(iii) Full reciprocity: any registered professional is eligible for registration in any state.
(iv) Deregulation: any qualified professional is recognised (for employment) at the discretion of the employer.

It is significant to note that VEETAC has recommended deregulation for the teaching profession (Keys, 1991). Their decision was made on the basis that the profession performs well on four of five criteria but fails the criterion on Health and Safety, a compulsory criterion for recognition. The basis for this decision appears somewhat arbitrary, and is currently being reviewed for a number of professions within VEETAC. 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 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) establish recognised state authorities for the nursing profession to assess competencies; and
(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? Porter (March, 1992) was that a national professional body could only be established if there was a CBS scheme. This may be appropriate if the competencies are used for promulgation of standards, that is as the means for prognosis and improvement of practice. This is the principal intent of the ANRAC competencies and relates to national standards through the profession appealing to the same competencies. Competency standards tied to registration purposes could be a state registering authorities’ matter co-ordinated by a national body. Mutual recognition through a national (co-ordinating) body would then be possible (NBET, 1991). Status’ rights issues are addressed and the individual professional ‘cultures’ in each state left ‘intact’.

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 state 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 might well be used to:
(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 (Fenshaw, 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 system which can be understood by peak 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 achievement 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. This focus is widely rejected by DEET but more professionally informed. This is the vocational training focus and teacher work is to be reorganised to meet the solutions to problems in the profession.

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 standards and employers which promote levels of performance rather than the formal qualifications one attains may be cynically viewed as yet another attempt to impose a prescriptive approach to teaching. There are other issues that emerge from a review of a selected number of professions and a move to CBS. In particular, the relative 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.

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TEND CHEMICALS COMMITTEE (AVCC) that the idea of competency and competence in relation to levels seven and eight of the National Standards Framework scheme have no place in universities. Further questions for teacher educators. The AVCC statement is clearly focussed on private sector professions (medicine, law, etc.), but how that group will defend the statement for public sector professions such as education and health is yet to be seen. To date the AVCC has had little to say and provided (covertly) minimal support in resisting developments that might adversely affect teacher education.

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