

2015

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Recommended Citation

Mockler, N. (2015). From Surveillance to Formation? A Generative Approach to Teacher 'Performance and Development' in Australian Schools. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(9). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n9.7>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol40/iss9/7>

From Surveillance to Formation? A Generative Approach to Teacher ‘Performance And Development’ in Australian Schools

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Abstract: This paper explores the possibilities and limitations of the AITSL Performance and Development Framework (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012b) as a vehicle for authentic teacher professional learning. It suggests that the Framework offers a range of implementation possibilities, from surveillance of teaching practice at one end of the spectrum to ongoing and generative formation of teachers at the other, and argues that at its best, the Framework will be interpreted and implemented as a catalyst for school-developed, inquiry-based professional learning that builds collegial professional practice and supports teachers to develop and take an inquiring stance toward their practice.

Recent years have seen a growing policy focus on professional learning on a national level in Australia. The production in 2012 by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) of both the *Australian Charter for the Professional Development of Teachers and School Leaders* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012a) and the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (PDF) (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012b) were part of a broader focus on ‘teacher quality’ by the previous Labor government (Mockler, 2013, 2014) that have had an ongoing impact on federal and state education policy. In NSW, for example, the *Great Teaching Inspired Learning Blueprint* (NSW Government, 2013) makes explicit use of the PDF alongside the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers in framing an intention regarding annual teacher performance management processes. Similar processes are currently being developed and implemented in other states.

This paper considers the *Performance and Development Framework* as a vehicle for teacher professional learning. It acknowledges both the possibilities and threats to teacher professionalism and learning embedded in the document and seeks to question the possible ways in which the Framework might be implemented for a range of purposes. It suggests that the best and most generative implementation of the PDF might draw on principles of inquiry-based professional learning to become a catalyst for collegial professional practice and the development of ‘inquiry as stance’ (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

The paper is presented in three parts. After a brief overview of the Performance and Development Framework and the context within which it has been developed, I explore four possible implementations of the performance and development cycle, building on earlier work around teacher appraisal (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). I then return to the framework itself to explore the possible overlap between the performance and development cycle and inquiry-based teacher professional learning, suggesting ways in which schools and school systems might leverage this confluence to use the Framework as a catalyst for new forms of professional learning that has embedded within it the capacity to transform teaching practice.

Background

Appraisal, 'teacher evaluation or 'performance review' for teachers has a relatively long history, emerging from the 'neoliberal turn' in education in the 1970s and 80s (Bartlett, 1996). As Stephen Ball wrote in 1990 of the growth of teacher appraisal in the United Kingdom over the previous decade:

Appraisal has become one of the prime features of the political reconstruction and disciplining of teachers as ethical subjects in the 1980s. It extends the logics of quality control and performance indicators into the pedagogical heart of teaching. It brings the tutelary gaze to bear, making the teacher calculable, describable and comparable. (Ball, 1990, p. 159)

The development of professional teaching standards has been a key dimension of the creation of the 'calculable, describable and comparable' teacher, often linked to the process of teacher appraisal, along with other mechanisms for achieving increased accountability for teachers.

A range of contrasting and sometimes competing purposes and aims of teacher appraisal processes are reflected in the literature, sometimes expressed as continua, including increased accountability and professional development (Bartlett, 1996), collaborative professionalism, quality enhancement and surveillance (Brix, Grainger, & Hill, 2014), development-oriented as opposed to performance management oriented (Gunter, 2001) and the ensuring of 'teacher effectiveness' (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, & Robinson, 2003; Jensen, 2011).

Furthermore, appraisal processes have often been seen as tools of accountability within regimes of audit and performativity, resonating with Ball's original assessment above (Ball, 2003; Gerrard & Farrell, 2013; Grundy & Robison, 2004; Gunter, 2001; Larsen, 2010). Collinson et al. (2009) chart what they see as a shift at the end of the 20th century from appraisal as a tool of accountability to more formative approaches to appraisal that aim to support 'teacher development and instructional improvement' (p. 6).

Gunter (2001) identified from the research literature three broad positions on the purpose of teacher appraisal, underlining that these different approaches are informed by different values and beliefs in relation to teachers' work and schooling more broadly:

- instrumental performance appraisal is about the tasks and behaviours required to enable organisational outcomes to be achieved and measured;
- humanist appraisal is developmental through a focus on teacher targets and by enabling teacher participation in the design and operation of the process;
- critical appraisal focuses on teaching and learning as the means through which teachers and pupils can recognise and overcome social injustices. (p. 245)

These three approaches relate not only to the purposes of teacher appraisal, but hold some clues as to where the control of the process lies: how far teachers themselves have agency to shape and guide it. Some years ago, Susan Groundwater-Smith and I developed a heuristic for thinking about teacher appraisal or review, developed around two axes, one representing the agency continuum and the other a continuum of purpose. The heuristic is adapted below as Figure 1.

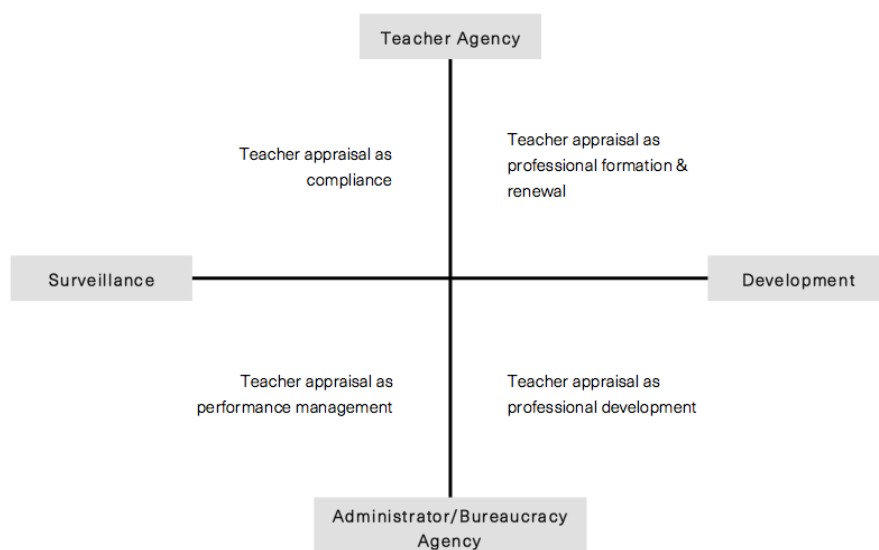


Figure 1: A heuristic for considering teacher appraisal
(adapted from Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009)

Teacher appraisal as compliance finds a level of agency lying with individual teachers but an overriding desire on the part of the school or system to ensure compliance through the inspection of practice, leaving the broader developmental possibilities largely unaddressed. Teacher appraisal as performance management sees teachers required to submit to processes and procedures administered as ‘one size fits all’, often for the purposes of accountability and audit. Where teacher appraisal is constituted as ‘professional development’, teachers are afforded little agency in the shaping of processes or the tailoring of these processes to their professional learning needs, despite a developmental intent. In the final quadrant, where teacher appraisal approaches professional formation and renewal, a developmental focus is supplemented by high levels of teacher agency, resulting in opportunities for teachers to engage in learning and development relevant to their circumstances. While this heuristic is undoubtedly a crude depiction of a complex concept, along with the various scales, dichotomies and taxonomies offered in the literature, this thinking about different configurations of, or approaches to, teacher appraisal informs the backdrop to this discussion of performance and development in Australia.

While teacher appraisal has been mandated in the United Kingdom and parts of the United States for some time now, until recently this kind of evaluation of teaching practice was left to the discretion of individual schools and school systems in Australia. In recent years, however, support for the concept of mandated appraisal has gathered momentum. The Productivity Commission *Schools Workforce* report (2012), published four months before the appearance of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* asserted that “for teachers to continue to develop professionally, they need high quality performance appraisal” (p.168). Within the productivity commission report, teacher appraisal is located within the realm of ‘performance management’ (p.168-182), while at the same time discussion of appraisal is couched in the language of ‘feedback and support’ (p.168). Much use is made within the report of then-recent reports from the OECD (Santiago & Benavides, 2009) and the Grattan Institute (Jensen, 2011), each of which aim to establish a mandate for teacher appraisal and all of which are, to echo the words of Bartlett (1996), “written from a managerial view assuming the worth of appraisal” (p.7).

It is against this local and international backdrop that the AITSL Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework was developed, perhaps unsurprisingly rising to the challenge set by the Productivity Commission in attempting to mandate appraisal systems for the purpose of ‘improving’ teaching practice. Like the Productivity Commission report and also those from the Grattan Institute and the OECD before it, contrasting and conflicting positions on the role, purpose and enactment of appraisal processes for teachers can be observed embedded in the document. This paper holds that these contrasts and ambiguities give rise to a variety of implementation options for schools and school systems, arguing that systems and processes that integrate inquiry-based professional learning hold the best hope for teacher appraisal to truly embrace the developmental intent in Australian schools.

The Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

The Performance and Development Framework posits that a strong culture of teacher performance and development is required in Australian schools in order for the goals of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) to be met. While the Framework nominates the five key factors of a focus on student outcomes; a clear understanding of effective teaching; leadership; flexibility; and coherence as central to the establishment of this culture, it also encourages schools and school systems to adapt and engage these factors in locally relevant ways, noting that “formal performance and development procedures are important, but excessive attention to process is a common feature of less successful approaches” (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012b, p. 3).

The ‘performance and development cycle’, which is said to sit within these five factors is then seen to consist the three phases of reflection and goal setting; professional practice and learning; and feedback and review. Table 1 below highlights the essential elements of these three phases.

Component	Essential Element/s
Reflection and goal setting	All teachers have a set of documented and regularly reviewed goals related to both performance and development, and ways of measuring progress towards them, that are agreed with the principal or delegate
Professional practice and learning	All teachers are supported in working towards their goals, including through access to high quality professional learning.
	Evidence used to reflect on and evaluate teacher performance, including through the full review described below, should come from multiple sources and include as a minimum: data showing impact on student outcomes; information based on direct observation of teaching; and evidence of collaboration with colleagues.
Feedback and review	All teachers receive regular formal and informal feedback on their performance. This includes a formal review against their performance and development goals at least annually, with verbal and written feedback being provided to the teacher.

Table 1: ‘Essential elements’ of the performance and development cycle (developed from Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012b, pp. 5-7)

The framework, then, requires each teacher to engage in an annual process involving goal setting, engagement in professional learning, gathering of evidence of professional practice, and formal feedback and review. The structures and processes to support this annual cycle, however, are unspecified, and open to being built and adapted to local needs on the part of schools and systems. While steeped in the language of ‘improvement’ and ‘teacher quality’, themselves highly contestable terms, the Framework document itself contains the somewhat unfashionable¹ observations that ‘Australia has a high performing education system that fares well on international comparisons. This has been achieved in large part through the efforts of highly skilled and motivated teachers and school leaders over generations’ (p. 2), encouraging school leaders to see the building of a generative professional culture as a key part of maintaining this level of performance into the future.

The Framework was developed in the context of increasing attention to ‘teacher quality’ and indeed the ongoing shift from discourses around *teaching* quality to those focused on *teacher* quality. Elsewhere (Mockler, 2013), I have discussed at some length this shift and its consequences for teacher professional learning, arguing that the rise of ‘teacher quality’ has consequently narrowed the definition of generative teacher professional learning, increasingly linking professional learning to teaching standards that promote narrow technical definitions of ‘good teaching’. Marilyn Cochran-Smith reminds us of the ‘unforgiving complexity’ of teaching, which renders these narrow definitions redundant and underpins the need for professional development responsive to the demands of the role.

Teaching is *unforgivingly complex*. It is not simply good or bad, right or wrong, working or failing. Although absolutes and dichotomies such as these are popular in the headlines and in campaign slogans, they are limited in their usefulness... They ignore almost completely the nuances of “good” (or “bad”) teaching of real students collected in actual classrooms in the context of particular times and places. They mistake reductionism for clarity, myopia for insight. (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 4, emphasis in the original)

The evaluation of professional practice for teachers is a fraught area, not least because of the ideas encapsulated in Eliot Eisner’s observation that “how we teach is ultimately a reflection of why we teach” (Eisner, 2006, p. 44). Teaching is an intensely personal business as well as a professional one, and the enactment of professional practice within the educational field is in many ways an expression of purpose: ‘good teaching involves the head *and* the heart’ (Day, 2004, p. 105, emphasis in original). The tension between this enactment of professional purpose and the need for teachers to be accountable to their students, schools and indeed each other makes the negotiation of processes of evaluation, appraisal or professional review complex and intricate.

These observations about the PDF are offered to contextualise those offered below on possible enactments of the Framework in schools. The discussion that follows is not intended to leave untroubled the issue of professional standards and their politics, but rather to build on earlier work (Sachs & Mockler, 2012) that acknowledges (a) the pervasiveness of cultures of performance in teaching, (b) the need to resist these cultures in the name of building and supporting teacher professionalism, and (c) the elements of these regimes that might be successfully ‘hijacked’ or put to use in the name of building rather than breaking down teacher professionalism.

¹ ‘Unfashionable’ because the rhetoric surrounding Australia’s decline on these international measures is generally the narrative favoured by politicians and the mass media.

Enacting the Performance and Development Framework in Schools

Returning to the heuristic presented in Figure 1 above and the two axes of purpose and agency, it is clear that the enactment of the Performance and Development Framework could potentially be located in any of the four quadrants, depending on how the issues of purpose and the issues of agency implicit in the document are read and understood.

Issues of Purpose

While couched in the language of international competition utilised often by the government of the day, as exemplified in the inclusion of the aim for Australia to be amongst the 'Top 5' nations as measured by international standardised testing by 2025 ("Australian Education Act," 2013), the PDF emphasises the importance of teacher development to the advancement of student learning outcomes through improving the quality of teaching. The Framework walks something of a knife edge in the dual emphasis on the improvement of 'teacher performance' (p.2) and the importance of 'creating a strong and supportive culture in a school' (p.3), within which teachers might develop and improve their teaching practice.

Furthermore, the Framework's observation that 'excessive attention to process is a common feature of less successful approaches' (p.3) to teacher appraisal/review and consequent focus on the essential factors to support such processes rather than the processes themselves, opens the door to a wide range of locally tailored approaches. While these include approaches that primarily focus on development and formation, they also potentially include approaches that tend more toward performance management. The Framework itself, however, notes that while the performance and development cycle might 'identify teachers who are underperforming against the requirements of their position, or against the requirements for continued registration', these issues should 'be managed through separate processes which are negotiated industrially' (p.8). The Framework is thus explicit about a developmental intent, the difference between appraisal that supports teacher development and that which 'manages' performance, and the potential (and intent) of the performance and development enterprise to affect cultural change within schools (p.8).

Issues of Agency

Consistent with its position on working with the desired factors or conditions for effective performance and development rather than prescribing a process, the Framework is largely silent on the issue of agency. Under the discussion of coherence it observes that:

performance and development goals should reflect the overall approach to teaching and learning within a school, and should be consistent with the school plans. It is important that teachers and school leaders experience performance and development as something that ties together the various activities they are engaged in, rather than a separate and additional process. Alignment to school plans and school-wide approaches to professional learning are particularly important. (p.4)

In reference to goal setting, the Framework indicates that goals should be set with reference to 'the school strategic plan, and goals or priorities set by and for teams of teachers within the school'. This appears to encourage some balance between teacher agency and leader/administrator agency, but there remains a silence around the need for teachers to engage as active agents of their own professional learning and development through shaping

the review process. The ‘essential element’ related to feedback and review positions teachers as passive recipients, noting that ‘all teachers receive regular formal and informal feedback on their performance. This includes a formal review against their performance and development goals at least annually, with verbal and written feedback being provided to the teacher’ (p.7).

While the Framework asserts that ‘improving teacher quality...is a collective responsibility’ (p.8), and indeed nothing in the Framework prevents schools and school systems from developing processes for appraisal and review that emphasise teacher agency and decision-making, the Framework does quietly position teachers as the recipients of appraisal and review while school leaders are assumed to be the *de facto* ‘drivers’ of the process.

Whether processes of teacher appraisal developed out of the Performance and Development Framework transcend performance management and compliance and reach the capacity to open up opportunities for professional formation will depend largely on how they are embraced by schools and school leaders. Practitioner inquiry holds the capacity to provide a rationale and structure for doing so, and it is to inquiry as a framework for performance and development that I now turn.

Inquiry as a Framework for Performance and Development **Teaching as a Research-based Profession**

Some years ago now, Cochran-Smith and Lytle developed the notion “inquiry as stance” as an organising construct for teacher professional learning, for both pre-service and in-service teachers.

Inquiry as stance is distinct from the more common notion of inquiry as time-bounded project or discrete activity within a teacher education course or professional development workshop. Teachers and student teachers who take an inquiry stance work within inquiry communities to generate local knowledge, envision and theorize their practice, and interpret and interrogate the theory and research of others. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 289)

Inquiry as stance, then, is an orientation on the part of teachers toward generation of, and engagement with, their own curiosities about their work, ongoing grappling with critical questions they confront in their classrooms, and a willingness to engage in debates about practice both within and beyond the school. Lawrence Stenhouse, in his call for teaching to become a research-based profession, defined research as ‘systematic inquiry made public’ (Stenhouse, 1979b, 1983), where the ‘made public’ dimension is manifest, in Stenhouse’s words, in ‘research becom[ing] part of a community of critical discourse. But perhaps too much research is published to the world, too little to the village’ (Stenhouse, 1981, p. 111). Central to Stenhouse’s notion of teaching as a research-based profession was the collaborative and collective dimension of the work: the notion that through the research enterprise the teaching profession might build a greater capacity for ‘face-to-face discourse’ (Stenhouse, 1981, p. 111).

Furthermore, Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s orientation in ‘inquiry as stance’ also resonates with Lieberman and Miller’s vision of teacher professional learning:

Teaching and learning are interdependent, not separate functions. In this view, teachers are primarily learners. They are problem posers and problem solvers; they are researchers; and they are intellectuals engaged in unraveling the learning process both for themselves and for the young people in their charge. Learning is not consumption; it is knowledge production. (Lieberman & Miller, 1990, p. 112)

The process of engaging in systematic inquiry within teaching is perhaps best demonstrated by what has been termed the ‘action research spiral’ (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014, see Figure 2 below). Within the spiral, teachers are called upon to plan, act and observe and reflect upon aspects of their practice before revising their plans, acting, observing and reflecting once again and so on. Such engagement requires teachers to be committed to the notion of continuous evolution of their practice based on their observations and reflections, ideally undertaken in concert and collaboration with trusted colleagues.

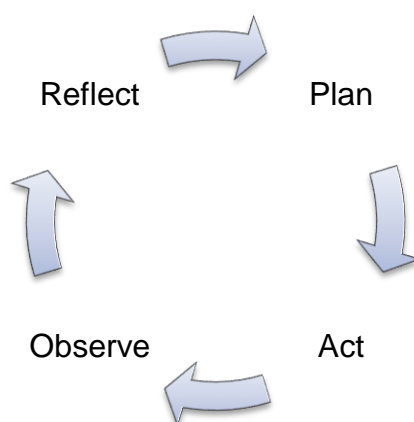


Figure 2: The Action Research Spiral (adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988)

Practitioner inquiry has, over a long period of time, been used as a highly successful vehicle for the cultivation of reflective practice and teacher inquiry in a range of contexts. Stenhouse wrote in the 1970s of the emancipatory qualities of teachers researching their practice, both in terms of liberating the teacher from the hegemony of research findings being ‘handed down’ to them and, more importantly in terms of professional learning and development, for enhancing professional judgement. He writes:

The essence of emancipation, as I conceive it, is the intellectual, moral and spiritual autonomy which we recognise when we eschew paternalism and the rule of authority and hold ourselves obliged to appeal to judgement. Emancipation rests not merely on the right of a person to exercise intellectual, moral and spiritual judgement, but upon the passionate belief that the virtue of humanity is diminished in man (sic.) when judgement is overruled by authority. (Stenhouse, 1979a, p. 163)

For Stenhouse, the practice of professional judgement and the exercise of trust which necessarily complements that practice cuts to the heart of ‘emancipation’ and in doing so, comes some significant way toward addressing Schön’s ‘crisis of confidence in professional knowledge’ (1983) and the need to build a reflective rationality for the profession. Furthermore, the kinds of research enterprises that he saw as integral to the building of teacher

professional judgement were those that made primary use of the local context, engaging with 'illuminative' research traditions rather than what he termed 'psycho-statistical' traditions:

Teaching is largely a response to the observation and monitoring of learning in cases. If this is so, then a crucial problem of the psycho-statistical paradigm ... is not simply that it deals in general prescriptions, but that it offers to guide teachers by overriding, rather than by strengthening, their judgement. (Stenhouse, 1985, p. 27)

The opportunities for teachers to come to "know their own knowledge" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 45) or to "come to know the epistemological bases of their practice" (Sachs, 2000, p. 90) afforded by engaging in practitioner inquiry form a foundation for the development of confidence and trust in professional judgement. Essentially, this is about emphasising the role of interpretation and judgement in teachers' engagement with research: recognising that they are best exercised in critical collaborative relationships wherein teacher-researchers can critically ponder, make sense of and re-think their practice, simultaneously developing their knowledge for and about practice.

Teacher inquiry provides a framework within which teachers can not only engage in the problem solving activities suggested by the prevalence of a technical rationality (which seeks to find answers to questions), but also the problematisation of their practice which is at the heart of a reflective rationality (which seeks to generate questions). Practitioner inquiry can provide a vehicle for teachers to move toward a greater understanding of the complexity of their practice, contextualised within the school in which they work, as well as within the society in which they and their students live. The development of a level of professional judgement which lives up to the challenge which Jill Blackmore (2002, p. 17) poses to practitioner researchers, to problematise as well as problem solve, to be strategic in their endeavours as well as relevant, and to require their work to be enriched by theory as well as practical experience, is one of the goals of an inquiry-based teaching profession.

Embracing Inquiry

Given this potential for teacher inquiry to foster professional learning and development, how then might these orientations be formed into an appraisal and review structure built on a Performance and Development Framework that has at its heart the dual purposes of teacher accountability and professional development? In this section of the paper, I posit some principles and processes that bridge the aims of teacher inquiry and those of the Performance and Development Framework. It is not my intention here to provide a fine-grained account of the inquiry process and how it might play out within the school and classroom context – examples of such can be gleaned from a myriad of works on the subject (see, for example, Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2003; Grundy, 1995). My intention here is to highlight the usefulness of teacher inquiry as a vehicle for successfully implementing the Performance and Development Framework to generative rather than reductive ends.

Framing the Enterprise: Critical Collegiality

Consistent with Stenhouse's position elaborated above, teacher inquiry works best as a catalyst for professional development when it is undertaken collaboratively (Kemmis, 2009). The process of designing inquiry, analysing and 'making sense' of data is generally enriched by the collegial discussions that inevitably take place within learning partnerships and teams, and part of the learning does in effect lie within these collegial conversations. The exposure of this work to a 'community of critical discourse' (Stenhouse, 1981, p. 111) is essential. To this end, it makes sense to establish a structure for teacher appraisal and review

that allows these partnerships to develop – a structure within which opportunities exist for teachers to work collaboratively with colleagues in an environment where they develop trust, provide feedback and play the role of ‘critical friend’ to each other through the process of designing and enacting their inquiry.

Such an approach sits comfortably with the Performance and Development Framework, with its focus on flexibility and an emphasis on using professional standards to provide ‘a common language for coming to a shared understanding of what effective teaching looks like in a particular school at a particular time’ (p.3). Furthermore, the Framework supports such critical collaboration through suggesting that teachers should ‘clearly articulate agreed goals based on the school’s shared view of effective teaching’, ‘with the support of the principal or delegate’. While it could be said that the Framework does not explicitly argue for a critical collegial approach, it could also be said that neither does it argue for a ‘top down’ approach. Jacobson and Battaglia, in mounting an argument for school-based professional learning processes such as self-assessment, collegial circles and action research to form a bridge to teacher assessment and appraisal, argue that such processes require a rethinking of organisational leadership to accommodate such critical collegiality:

These forms of evaluation can provide a conceptual link between staff development and teacher appraisal. But, to be implemented successfully, they demand a redefinition of central and site-based leadership, especially with regard to the relationship between teachers and administrators and the development of organisational structures that support the context for such initiatives. (Jacobson & Battaglia, 2002, p. 75)

This remains one of the challenges of this kind of approach to teacher appraisal, a challenge partly about collegiality and partly about teacher agency, because only in environments where the kind of transformational leadership that values teacher agency and professional judgement exists will teachers be sufficiently emboldened to take charge of the process of evaluation and development themselves.

Central to the effective conduct of practitioner inquiry is the capacity for the research focus to emerge from teachers’ own questions and concerns (Sachs, 1999) rather than be dictated by an external source. The Framework, with its strong focus on teachers’ goals being set with reference to school priorities and goals, does not close off this possibility, but makes it necessary, in order for this to occur, that appropriate supporting organisational structures be put into place, in the way that Jacobson and Battaglia (2001) advocate.

In the best iterations of practitioner inquiry, teachers engage in establishing a set of research problems or questions, focused upon and emanating from their professional practice. While the broad focus of these might be suggested by the school, it is of critical importance that teachers are allowed adequate agency to determine the focus of their inquiry as related to their classroom practice. While the PDF requires that teachers’ goals be linked to the professional teaching standards and set within the context of school goals and plans, for the approach to this task to be generative rather than reductive, it is essential that the ‘agenda’ for inquiry, professional learning, and appraisal be set by teachers themselves.

Collecting and Understanding Evidence

A critical part of the practitioner inquiry process is the collection and theorising of evidence about practice. The critical role of evidence is also emphasised in the Performance and Development Framework, as an integral part of the ‘professional practice and learning’ phase of the performance and development cycle. The Framework posits that ‘the complex

work of teaching generates a rich and varied range of evidence that can inform meaningful evaluations of practice' (p.6), and indicates that some potential sources of evidence that teachers might utilise include:

- evidence of the impact of teaching on student outcomes
- direct observation of teaching
- evidence of the teacher's impact on colleagues and the school as a whole
- student feedback
- peer/supervisor feedback
- parent feedback
- teacher self-assessment
- evidence of participation in professional learning and teacher reflection on its impact (p.6).

Furthermore, the Framework stipulates that the following is an 'essential element' of the review process:

Evidence used to reflect on and evaluate teacher performance, including through the full review described below, should come from multiple sources and include as a minimum: data showing impact on student outcomes, information based on direct observation of teaching; and evidence of collaboration with colleagues. (p.6)

The scope of the evidence required to be collected in the name of the performance and development cycle is, thus, very broad, with classroom observation the only stipulated method of evidence collection to be employed. A diverse range of methods for collecting evidence have long been employed by teacher researchers (see, for example, Arthurs, Patterson, & Bentley, 2014; Firth, Melia, Bergan, & Whitby, 2014; Wilson, 2014; Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014). While surveys, interviews and classroom observations are some of the more conventional methods employed in teacher inquiry, for many years now teacher researchers such as those involved in the Coalition of Knowledge-building Schools have employed creative methods for collecting data from students and others, using, for example, photographs, music, drawings and video (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett, & Bottrell, 2015; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2003).

These methods lend to approaches to analysis that might well be considered more 'forensic' than 'adversarial', a notion that Groundwater-Smith and I have written widely about over the past two decades, arguing for the need for teachers engaged in inquiry to take a forensic approach (which aims to 'shed light' on a phenomenon) rather than an adversarial approach (which aims to 'prove' a hypothesis) to the evidence they collect (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2002, 2009; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015a). The triangulation of a range of evidence and the collaborative fashion in which the 'making sense of data' is entered into, as well as the public sharing of findings (discussed further below) underpins the accountability of teacher researchers to the inquiry process. Where mechanisms are put in place whereby analysis of data is fed back to the participants from whom the data was collected, and ideas debated and 'defended' in a forum such as a team meeting or in the context of professional review, checks and balances are built in such that they become indicators of the quality of the work undertaken.

The Village and the World: Feedback and Critical Discourse

As noted above, Stenhouse wrote of research as “systematic inquiry made public” (1979a, p. 15), arguing that teacher research needed to be opened to the community of critical discourse, whether on the scale of the ‘village’ or the ‘world’. The process of ‘making sense’ of evidence and debating findings with trusted colleagues is part of this ‘making public’, while some teacher researchers determine to share their findings with the ‘world’ via publication (see, for example, Beckett, 2014). Research reports prepared for colleagues within the school and journal articles prepared for professional journals and magazines are ‘middle ground’ examples of how this might be accomplished by teacher researchers, while the professional learning portfolio is another mechanism for documenting inquiry-based professional learning.

The PDF requires ‘verbal and written feedback’ to be provided to teachers in the context of a ‘formal review against their performance and development goals’, claiming the importance of creating spaces for teacher reflection to inform future practice. The shape of this feedback and the associated reflective space is best linked to the nature of the evidence collected and undertaken in the context of critical, collegial relationships. At its best, practitioner inquiry engages not only in the celebration of good practice, but also in the telling of ‘unwelcome truths’ (Kemmis, 2006; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015b) about practice, tales of practice that might be rendered problematic and consequently provide impetus for change. Such processes, however, require teachers to take genuine risks in this work, and only flourish under conditions where there are high levels of trust and where the process is underpinned by an authentic desire (particularly on the part of school leadership) for formation and transformation, as opposed to a focus on measurement and accountability. Where inquiry is linked to teacher appraisal, this may well be exponentially true. For teacher appraisal to have any chance of providing the catalyst for growth, development and ‘improvement’ suggested by the Performance and Development Framework, the embracing of ‘unwelcome truths’ will be necessary. Consequently, so will be the engendering of a kind of critical community of practice in schools, to make such work both possible and desirable on the part of teachers. The issue of how far and by what means the work is subsequently published to ‘the village’ (and indeed, what ‘village’) and ‘the world’ is one for resolution within the local context, by those who drive the inquiry, but opening inquiry to this community of critical discourse, however it may be construed, is an essential part of engaging in the process.

Conclusion

It is still very early days in the implementation of teacher appraisal processes in most Australian schools. While the ideas advanced in this paper can be observed in action in some contexts (see, for example, Kirkby, 2015), there remain other examples where approaches akin to compliance or performance management are the models adopted in schools. This paper has focused on the development of a structure for teacher appraisal which has at its core a concern for teacher formation and renewal and the encouragement of teacher agency within the professional learning frame. Such a structure reflects the complex, difficult and intellectual work in which teachers engage, and values the adoption of an ‘inquiry as stance’ orientation to both practice and appraisal, at individual teacher and whole-school level. Using an inquiry frame, it will be possible for schools to implement the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework in ways that are truly generative and formative for teachers, but such an approach will demand a critical orientation on the part of those

responsible for overseeing and designing local appraisal processes; a commitment to teacher agency, formation and renewal as the key purposes behind the process; and a corresponding desire to separate processes of appraisal of practice from those of performance management.

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the critical feedback provided on an earlier version of this paper by Susan Groundwater-Smith.