

**The National Institute for Quality Teaching and
School Leadership (NIQTSL)**

Standards for School Leadership Project

**Issues paper and Consultation Questionnaire
August – October 2005**

DOCUMENT TWO

CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

**Teaching and Learning Research Program
Australian Council for Educational Research**

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Who is this document for?

The consultation questionnaire is intended to draw upon the expertise and experience of all groups and agencies with an involvement or interest in leadership standards and professional learning for school leaders.

Why is this consultation taking place?

The purpose of this current consultation is to identify some of the main issues that might be associated with introducing a profession-wide approach to the development and implementation of school leadership standards.

How to complete the questionnaire?

This is an electronic questionnaire. You can complete the questionnaire by typing directly into it.

To complete the questionnaire electronically START by SAVING this document on to your own computer and work with this saved file.

To respond to the questions either place the cursor in the greyed area provided after each question. It looks like this . Alternatively, press the 'Tab' key on your computer keyboard to move from one question to the next. Remember this means use the 'Tab' key only after you have finished typing in your response to a question. We strongly suggest you do a 'save' after each response to minimise losing any of your work.

There is no limit to how many words you can type within these grey areas. You can only type in the grey areas. If you wish to change something you have written simply delete the text and start again. You cannot delete or change the text outside the grey boxes. You can try this out here:

You do not need to complete the questionnaire in one sitting. You can stop at any time, save the file and re-open it again later. You can review and change anything you have entered at any time.

You are not obliged to respond to all the questions but your organisation's responses will be important in the development of a comprehensive and thoughtful draft options paper for NIQTSL to consider.

Timeline and returning the questionnaire?

Please email the completed questionnaire to Michelle Anderson andersonm@acer.edu.au on or before **Friday 14th October 2005**. If you decide not to do the questionnaire we would appreciate you letting us know. This way we will not send you reminders.

Use of responses?

The views of the profession elicited through this consultation will feed directly into a draft paper on options for a national approach to the development of standards and professional certification for school leaders. A further opportunity for the profession to feed into the development of options will be provided through a National Forum which will be held in Canberra in late November. The details of the Forum are yet to be determined.

SECTION 1 INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONDENT

DATE: 14 October 2005

A. DETAILS OF ORGANISATION

Name of organisation: The Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers Inc.

Address of organisation: GPO Box 1729

City: Adelaide

State: SA

Postcode: 5001

Telephone: 08 83630288

Signature: (required only if returning a hard copy)

B. Does the organisation consent to being identified in the report from the consultation for NIQTSL? **Yes** **No**

C. Does the consultation response contain any confidential information? No

D. Please note that we may contact you during the consultation process to clarify or seek further information arising from your responses. If you do not wish to be contacted please check (X) this box

SECTION 2 THE IDEA OF A STANDARDS-GUIDED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SYSTEM

Most professions develop a system to support and encourage their members to develop toward high, profession-defined standards of practice. The main purpose behind professional standards is to delineate the knowledge base that underlies effective practice as a guide to professional self-assessment, learning and assessment for certification by a professional body.

The standards articulate what a professional believes its members should know and be able to do, based on professional values, research and the experience of highly regarded practitioners. In this way, a profession aims to provide the public with an assurance of quality in return for the trust that the public places in professional bodies to develop and implement standards of practice.

Professional bodies usually provide some kind of certification or accreditation to members of the profession who attain those standards. While certification is a valuable form of recognition in itself, professions are also concerned to ensure that their certification is seen as credible by the public and useful to employers for various purposes such as selection and career progression.

The essential components of a fully functioning standards-guided system for professional learning are:

- **Profession-defined standards** that describe effective practice and provide goals and direction for professional learning over the long term
- An **infrastructure for professional learning** that enables practitioners to develop the attributes and capabilities embodied in the standards
- A credible, voluntary system of **professional certification**, based on evidence that the standards have been attained.
- Selection procedures and career paths that provide **recognition and incentives** for those who gain professional certification.

Taken together, these components form a ‘system’ of interdependent and mutually supportive parts. Take one away and the system loses its capacity to function effectively as an instrument for encouraging and recognising evidence of professional learning. The interlocking character of these components is captured in the issues paper (Document 1).

(See page 9 of the Issues Paper)

1. What value could a standards-guided professional learning system for principals have for Australian schools?

Before answering this question, this response needs to provide some background to make the AAMT's position clear. This necessarily leads on to some fundamental general criticism of the paper — its apparent premises and some confusion that results from the language used. We have taken this approach as it is not clear how else these matters can be raised in the format provided by this feedback form in a way that puts them 'up-front'.

Background

The AAMT has been one of a few key discipline specific national professional associations that has taken a lead in developing and implementing advanced level teaching standards since 1999. Hence we would claim that our response is well-founded in experience in the general 'standards' area — there is much more that is in common between our work on standards and that of principals' standards than that which is not.

Fundamental criticism of the Paper

The paper should be entitled 'Standards for School Principals'. We note that this is the language of this response proforma. In the Issues Paper itself, the term 'leadership' is used. These terms are not synonymous. Contemporary views of leadership in schools see it as distributed through the staff and beyond. Leadership is not vested in those with positional roles as principals; nor is leadership development only directed towards those who are aspiring principals. As one example, curriculum leadership in schools is commonly shared with deputy principals, learning area supervisors, and others. The final letter in the NIQTSL acronym is most certainly not interpreted by NIQTSL or educators connected with NIQTSL as referring exclusively to principals, and yet the Issues Paper misleadingly gives this impression.

If we consider the language around standards for teaching and standards for teachers it seems the English language fails us in the case of school principals. We need a term 'principalling' to define what principals do. It is misleading to call what they do leading.

Please be very clear that this response is premised on this change of title. In our view, the issue of standards for educational leadership is not canvassed in this paper; development of standards for leadership is a very different project and process than is the development of standards for principals. Some suggestions on that are included and discussed at the end of this response.

Other general comments

Some other terms in the Issues Paper are unclear as well. These are 'profession' and 'professional association'. It would appear that these terms refer to principals and their organisations. That can only be appropriate if the document is about standards for principals/principalling. If the paper is to be about leaders/leading, then the profession is 'educators' and all education professional associations are included, not only those for principals. Indeed, by their nature, most professional education associations survive and thrive because of the voluntary leadership activities of members of the associations.

We note also in passing that the AAMT's experience (and that of an increasing number of teacher professional associations) is very different from that of most principals' professional associations, certainly the major national ones. It seems that these groups have talked about standards a great deal but done little in practice. In several of the briefing/consultations in September this lack of 'runs on the board' resulted in much anxiety among principals (and indeed within their professional organisations). It is our impression that the interim Board of NIQTSL believed that developing professional standards for principals would be an easier and quicker task than the similar task for teachers. This would now seem to be in question — it is our view, based on experience, that there is a great deal to do to bring rank and file principals along with this discussion.

The question — "What value could a standards-guided professional learning system for principals have for Australian schools."

The answer here is essentially the answer to this question if asked about teachers: The value in the broadest sense is having a common language to describe and discuss the work of school principals. In terms of the four dot points above, the first three are unproblematic. The fourth dot point can only be positive and not compromise the first three if and only if those responsible for selection; designing career paths; and remuneration show what would be uncharacteristic levels of trust in the profession, and restraint in the level of control.

SECTION 3 STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT

Dictionaries give two inter-related uses of the term “standard”: to *rally*, as around a banner, or flag (standard); and to *measure*.

As rallying points, standards aim to articulate core values that professionals seek to make manifest in their practice. Developers of professional standards will be guided by conceptions of quality practice. Standards, by definition, are statements about what is valued.

As measures, standards not only describe what practitioners need to know and be able to do to put these values into practice; they describe how attainment of that knowledge is to be assessed, and what counts as meeting the standard. A standard, in the latter sense, is the level of performance on the criterion being assessed that is considered satisfactory in terms of the purpose of the evaluation.

When standards are used as measures of performance, there are three essential steps in their development. These are:

1. Defining what is to be measured (e.g. what is good leadership?) These are often called the *content* standards
2. Deciding how it will be measured, or how relevant evidence about practice (leadership) will be gathered, and
3. Identifying what counts as meeting the standard, or how good is good enough. This leads to *performance* standards.

(See page 10 of the Issues Paper)

1. Does your organisation share the same understanding of “standards” as described in the issues paper? If not, what is your understanding?

The AAMT does not accept the basis for standards as described in the issues paper and repeated above as a suitable basis for the development of standards in a field of professional activity. In such a field, there is a need for professionally agreed aspirational standards that exemplify the highest levels of professionalism relevant to its members, and from such standards it is possible to produce a professionally and generally acceptable set of statements that typify stages in the development of professional expertise and experience. In all cases where these become a basis for assessing a member against the standards for an appropriate stage, the assessment should be via an agreed professional judgement process, embedded in a career-wide professional development process.

The three-step approach to standards suggested in the paper (what, how & what counts) is likely to lead to a fragmented approach in which largely the immediately measurable "counts" toward the certification - assessment will become the tail that wags the dog. The backwash of this approach narrows the performance measures and the performance domains - encouraging people to do only what is "on the test". Both principalling and leading require much more than this to be effective.

An holistic approach to determining standards is needed; this requires judgement rather than measurement. It is the consensus and agreement among qualified judges that ultimately defines a standard. Once a range of standards judgements are made for different levels of performance, it is easy to "see", explain, "point at" the evidence that supports the judgements in a way that is entirely convincing.

Work on standards for complex performance such as principalling needs to be holistic in nature.

2. What benefits might there be for principals and prospective principals of a profession-wide system of standards?

These would be the same as for teachers and include public recognition and appreciation of the role, clear career-long professional development trajectories for principals, means for measuring progress towards the goals of the standards, defensible means for recognising those who are doing a good job.

3. What benefits might there be for employing authorities and other interested parties in a profession-wide system of standards for principals?

Confidence that the cohort of principals/aspiring principals is improving their knowledge and skills in the direction of profession-defined best practice. Note that any thought of quality assurance in relation to appointments of principals would be impossible in the context of voluntary engagement with the credentialling process.

4. In developing a national system of professional standards for principals, what issues would need to be addressed?

The process would need to be transparent and undertaken by principals themselves in order to create the required levels of ownership within that section of the profession. As indicated, the timeline probably needs to be revisited.

5. What is your organisation's attitude to the development of profession-wide standards for principals?

The AAMT would view it as a good thing, in principle. This view is based on the Association slowly seeing the benefits of its extensive work on standards for teaching mathematics. Voluntary application of such standards would be an important feature.

6. What role would your organisation want to play in the development of a national system of standards for principals?

The AAMT would be happy to share what we have learnt with the principals doing the developmental work.

7. Which agency or agencies should be involved in the development of standards?

There is probably some question about the extent to which principals' professional associations represent principals; however these are the people who demonstrate commitment to their work as principals by paying membership fees. Hence we would see the principals' associations being the core agencies in developing professional standards for principalling/principals.

NIQTSL will naturally need to be involved, if for no other reason than being the funding agency. The practice of having a 'steering committee' seems a sensible level of involvement while the developmental work is going on.

8. What mechanisms should be adopted to ensure broad involvement of the profession and other stakeholders in the development of a profession-wide system of standards for principals?

Whilst we see ensuring broad involvement as essentially the responsibility, in practice, of the principals' professional associations, NIQTSL can and should play an important quality assurance role. The level of principal and stakeholder involvement should be extensive; paying attention to what is needed to make sure it happens should be a priority.

9. How can stakeholder involvement in standards development be optimised?

It is assumed this means "...stakeholder involvement in development of standards for principals/principalling..." There are different types of stakeholders, and this suggests that targeted strategies are needed. Further, even within categories there is substantial diversity of interest. The AAMT, for example, would be keen to have input as a stakeholder, based on our commitment to the field of professional standards; other non-principal professional associations may need encouragement to take the need for their input seriously. An important group of stakeholders includes experienced teachers in schools, who are likely to have seen a variety of principals come and go and thus are likely to be able to offer informed comment about standards for principalling. Importantly, they are less likely to have a vested interest in the matter.

SECTION 4 PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

Professional certification is an endorsement that a professional body gives to a member who has attained a specified set of performance standards. Certification by a professional body is usually:

- available to all members of the profession;
- based on assessment of performance (not an academic qualification, although such qualifications may have a valuable role in preparing for certification);
- portable and belong to the person (not a job or position or classification specific to a school or employing authority).

A professional certification system enables a profession to build its own infrastructure for defining standards, promoting development over the long term toward those standards and providing recognition to those who reach them. In other words, it enables the profession to build a professional development system guided by profession-defined standards, as distinct from the often fragmented and non-sequential nature of much professional development provision.

(See page 15 of the Issues Paper)

1. What approaches for providing profession-wide certification seem most appropriate for Australian school principals?

The model that is likely to emerge as the only feasible one in the area of advanced teaching standards is of a 'lean' NIQTSL providing its imprimatur to profession-owned and conducted processes of assessment and certification. The AAMT makes no secret of its desire to have its Highly Accomplished Teacher of Mathematics credential nestle within a NIQTSL framework, and seeks to work towards making this a reality. The position should be the same for school principals.

The approach to certification should be completely performance based; ie no valuing of 'courses', new qualifications and certificates — these should only be valued if they are translated into demonstrated improvement in practice.

2. Which agency or agencies should provide profession-wide certification for principals in Australia?

As above — principals' professional associations, through and under the umbrella of NIQTSL.

3. Should standards for principals be differentiated by levels of schooling or area(s) of specialism?

The challenge for the written standards is to define the core of what is unique and can be judged through a peer evaluation process about being a principal. This was achieved by the AAMT for

mathematics teaching, despite initial suggestions that it would not be possible to generate standards that were applicable K-12. Hence it is our advice to commence the development on the assumption that a single set of standards for principals is achievable and desirable. If and only if this assumption proves unworkable should any thoughts of differentiation be entertained.

4. How should professional associations and other organisations be involved in developing methods for gathering and assessing evidence for professional certification of principals?

As above — it should be their project, within parameters developed and agreed by NIQTSL after extensive consultation with the field.

5. How might the level of involvement of professional organisations and associations in the development of assessments and any certification process be optimised?

As above — again, this work is work that must be done by principals' associations.

6. On what forms of evidence could certification for principals be based? (e.g. course completion, assessment centre paper and pencil tasks; in-tray, scenarios, simulations, portfolio entries, etc.)

Apart from rejecting the option of accumulating course completion as being inconsistent with the notion of 'performance' standards, the AAMT suggests it is impertinent for anyone but principals and their organisations to provide this advice.

In addition, attention needs to be paid to the question of maintaining standards once reached, suggesting that certification is limited to an agreed time period. A process for re-certification, most likely different from the original process, needs to be considered here as well by principals and their professional organisations.

7. This issues paper makes a distinction between certification provided by a professional body and performance management systems in particular education employing authorities. Is there a place for profession-wide certification in addition to existing systems for performance management?

Yes; in fact the former is much more likely to improve the quality of principalling in this country.

SECTION 5 CREATING AN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STANDARDS-GUIDED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

A key component of any professional standards and certification system is the infrastructure created to support standards-based professional learning. This infrastructure can include a wide variety of providers and activities.

Typical providers of professional learning for principals include professional associations, employing authorities, ‘leadership academies’ of various types and universities, among others. Increasingly, the workplace itself and networks of schools provide sites for professional support and learning. Professional learning activities may take many forms, including formal courses for qualifications, conferences, mentoring programs, self-directed study and local support networks. From the perspective of teachers and principals, though, these activities may sometimes seem fragmented and non-sequential. **(See page 21 of the Issues Paper)**

The earlier section explored questions to do with “standards development”. Much work in this area is evident, already, in the states and territories. In this section the questions explore the merit and possibilities of creating a national infrastructure for professional learning using school leadership standards.

1. What activities and elements might comprise a suitable infrastructure for supporting standards-guided professional learning?

This is for principals to decide from 'within the field'

2. What role might your organisation play in providing an infrastructure to support standards-guided professional learning?

The AAMT is willing to provide advice based on experience as to the type of infrastructure needed to support standards-based learning, but the supply of infrastructure per se is extremely difficult without some form of outcomes-based funding support from appropriate authorities.

SECTION 6 BUILDING SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION FOR CERTIFICATION

An essential component of any professional certification system is that employing authorities and the general public regard it as a credible indicator of meeting professional standards. Tasks including in building credibility include:

- Demonstrating the validity of the certification as an indicator of professional development
- Encouraging the development of a market for school leaders with a professional certification.
- Providing a service that employers find credible and valuable
- Providing a process that engages school leaders in effective forms of professional learning – that adds value to the professional learning that employing authorities already provide
- Providing a service that assists employing authorities with recruitment and selection of school leaders

Professional bodies need to prove to employing authorities and the general public that their certification provides valid evidence of professional development and future performance. Certification should be a reliable indicator that a member of the profession has demonstrated that they have attained the knowledge and capabilities as described in the standards. In the case of leadership, certification should be based on a valid record of accomplishment in providing effective leadership in schools, whether as an aspiring or an experienced principal. (See page 23 of the Issues Paper)

1. What benefits might a profession-wide system of standards and certification have in terms of:
<p>Principal mobility Portable credential that is a clear indicator of achievement. Hence principals may be able to move more easily.</p>
<p>Retention Hard to see any benefits.</p>
<p>Attracting and retaining principals in ‘high need’ locations, settings and areas There may be a feeling that these sorts of ‘complex’ settings provide greater challenges and therefore more opportunities to demonstrate achievement of high standards by principals. So attracting principals to these schools may be enhanced; retaining them in these locations may not be improved...with their demonstrated skills they may be more in demand elsewhere.</p>
<p>Other</p>

2. Under what conditions would your organisation be interested in providing support/recognition/incentives for a profession-wide system of certification for principals?

The AAMT is not in a position to take any of these actions. We would support it happening, however, as part of a wider effort for there to be support/recognition/incentives for our Highly Accomplished Teachers of Mathematics. We would not support this sort of treatment for principals without similar treatment for teachers of mathematics.

3. How might a profession-wide system of standards for principals relate to existing systems?

Question is not clear — which 'existing systems?'

SECTION 7 FURTHER COMMENTS

Please provide any additional comments.

This submission takes the view that the work that is canvassed in the Issues Paper is about Professional Standards for "Principalling"/Principals. This is also the way the Response Proforma is written. The AAMT believes that a project to develop and implement these sorts of standards is both feasible and could lead to positive outcomes for principals and schools. We need to stress, however, that the decision to develop such standards must rest with principals themselves, as must the work to develop them and then, ultimately, to implement them for credentialling.

This position begs the issue of Standards for Leadership in Australian Schools. We do see a way forward, however, that will see the development and likely implementation of standards for "leadership".

The advanced teaching standards developed by the national professional associations have embedded in them a range of expectations about leadership. This is also true of the WA Level 3 assessments. It should be possible to determine, through document analysis and other means, the common and key messages about 'leadership' that are important across the three (or more) areas. Now, it remains true that the vast majority of principals move through the ranks of teachers to become principals. It is our thesis that they develop capacities as leaders in education. Some of the core of what is required as a 'leader' is that which is the common expectations from the advanced teaching standards.

We would argue that there is another project that is truly about educational leadership. It involves deriving the core from the advanced teaching standards and defining what else people know and do in the context of 'distributed leadership'. A last component is the "Leading for distributed leadership". This is a set of knowledge and skills that is accessible to those who are not in positional leadership roles, as well as those who are. Anyone who achieves this set of standards is probably meeting the necessary standards for being an 'aspiring principal', although that definition again really requires input and decisions by principals themselves, as they are the ones who know their own work (for example a non-positional leader in a distributed leadership culture may well be able to lead very effectively without the financial knowledge and skills required for being a principal)

Thank you for providing your organisation's views on the development of standards and professional certification. You may be contacted for follow-up information or comment.

Please email your organisation's completed consultation questionnaire to andersonm@acer.edu.au on or before **Friday 14th October 2005**.

Any queries please contact Michelle Anderson on the above email or telephone (03) 9835 7410.

