



How do teacher educators use professional standards in their practice?

Terri Bourke ^{a,*}, Mary Ryan ^b, Paul Ould ^c

^a Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

^b Faculty of Human Sciences, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia

^c Office of Education Research, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

HIGHLIGHTS

- Discourse analysis was used to examine teacher educator practices around standards.
- Teachers used standards developmentally but also in a compliant fashion.
- A more productive approach to the use of standards is required.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 21 November 2017

Received in revised form

27 May 2018

Accepted 10 June 2018

Keywords:

Accreditation

Discourse analysis

Teacher education

Standards

ABSTRACT

In many countries, the professional standards agenda in education continues to colonize teacher preparation through accreditation processes. This study investigates the lived experiences of teacher educators working within this increasingly accredited environment. Discourse analytic techniques determine the dominant discourses experienced by teacher educators regarding standards in their practice. These discourses are cross-analyzed with the relevant accreditation document and academic literature around standards. Findings reveal that teacher educators use standards developmentally but more predominantly in a compliant fashion with a degree of resistance. The authors recommend more productive uses of standards to enhance the quality of teacher education practices.

© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Internationally, many governments and regulatory bodies seek to ensure the consistent preparation, readiness, and performance of teachers through accreditation policies and associated professional standards implementation. Whilst the commodification of education has been reported at length, as well as the effect on teachers, schools, and classrooms ([Author 1], 2011; [Author 1], [Author 2], & [Colleague], 2012; Clarke & Moore, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Ingvarson, 2010; Marrongelle, Sztajn, & Smith, 2013; Ní Chróinín, Tormey, & O'Sullivan, 2012; Polikoff, 2013; Taubman, 2009), less is documented on the impact on teacher educators (Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014). Indeed, according to many commentators (Davey,

2013; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014), empirical research on those who teach teachers is scarce, often described as a poorly understood occupational group who have been overlooked (Murray & Male, 2005; Zeichner, 2006). With limited research in tertiary education specifically around teacher educators and their responses to accreditation/standards, further investigation in this terrain is paramount.

The location for this study is Australia, a country that is following the rest of the world, particularly America, in its educational reforms related to the “twin banners” of standards and accountability (Taubman, 2009). After revisiting standards discourses in the academic literature, the limited research around accreditation/standards in teacher education is outlined before the contemporary Australian standards context is briefly discussed. Then, the methodological framework explicates how Foucauldian archaeological analysis ([Author 1 & Colleague, 2014]) is used as a template to examine teacher educators' practices in one university regarding standards. The resulting discourses are cross-analyzed

* Corresponding author. Queensland University of Technology, Victoria Park Road, Kelvin Grove QLD 4059, Australia.

E-mail addresses: theresa.bourke@qut.edu.au (T. Bourke), mary.ryan@mq.edu.au (M. Ryan), p.ould@hdr.qut.edu.au (P. Ould).

with discourses from the accreditation document at the time of interview and then examined in the light of the academic literature. The paper concludes with recommendations for a more productive approach to the use of professional standards by teacher educators.

2. Developmental versus regulatory standards

The academic literature around standards has been reported at length elsewhere so will be summarized here in the interests of space. Over many years, various nomenclatures have been used for professional standards, but most academics agree on two schools of thought on how professional standards are viewed – a developmental discourse and a regulatory discourse to borrow the terminology from Mahony and Hextall (2000). These are summarized in Table 1.

The lexical linking across the developmental discourse is that these standards are developed by teachers and for teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Mahony & Hextall, 2000; Sachs, 2003), what Mayer, Mitchell, Macdonald, and Bell (2005) have called standards for teaching. They are owned and overseen from within the profession and purport to improve the quality of teaching through professional learning opportunities so teachers can become more effective across their careers. Inadvertently, it is hoped that better teachers will improve student outcomes (standards for quality improvements (Sachs, 2003)). Sachs (2003), in the Australian context, advocated an autonomous professional teaching group interested in improving effective teaching practices and focusing on longer term gains for the profession. Other influential commentators agreed with her point of view, including Darling-Hammond (2001), and Flowers and Hancock (2003). For example, Flowers and Hancock (2003) maintain that developmental standards are a powerful vehicle for professional development and a good framework defining good practice.

On the contrary, regulatory standards (Mahony & Hextall, 2000) discourses are reported to remove autonomy and limit diversity of practice. Imposed by governments through accreditation, certification, or registration processes, they focus on the technical demands of teaching, and emphasize quality assurance rather than quality delivery to improve quality outcomes. It may be fair to assume that quality assurance would improve quality teaching and student outcomes, but this may not be the case as these types of standards according to Sachs (2003) merely focus on accountability to the public. Sachs' (2003) other standards discourses (see Table 1) include commonsense standards and standards for certification or control which she maintains are both regulatory. Commonsense standards as benchmarks of minimum levels of achievement prescribe what teachers should know and be able to do, and are usually used for teacher licensure (standards for certification or control). Mayer et al. (2005) refer to these as standards for accountability or standards for teachers. They are not about quality teaching *per se*, but rather teacher control mechanisms, standardizing in a high surveillance environment and breeding compliance (Sachs, 2003). This academic literature is useful for conveying the different messages about how standards have been viewed temporally. More recent studies on

professional standards globally, rather than identifying types or discourses of standards, are more concerned with arguing for a degree of caution about their implementation ([Author 1], 2011; [Author 1], [Author 2], & [Colleague], 2012; Clarke & Moore, 2013; Ní Chróinín et al., 2012; Tang, Cheng, & So, 2006). However, regardless of how standards are viewed, their promulgation and implementation continues both in schools and, more importantly here, accreditation in teacher education. The overarching research question for this study, therefore, is: how do teacher educators use professional standards in their practice?

3. Positioning teacher educators in the accreditation/standards agenda

Little attention has been paid to research about teacher educators and how they enact their professional practice (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014), or as Cochran-Smith (2005) has pointed out, quite often teacher educator research on themselves is not taken seriously or ignored. A decade ago, Murray, Nuttall, and Mitchell (2007) surveyed the Australian teacher educator academic literature, revealing research on topics such as pre-service teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards disciplines such as maths and ICT, reflective practice, and practicum-related research, but very little about teacher educators themselves.

More recently, studies around teacher educator identity have entered the academic literature, and in 2011 a special issue of the *Journal of Education for Teaching* was devoted to teacher educators' identities from various countries including the USA, Norway, Pakistan, UK, Australia, and Canada. These studies focused on, for example, teacher educators' accidental pathways into academia (Mayer, Mitchell, Santoro, & White, 2011), academic subtribes (Menter, 2011; Murray, Gzerniawski, & Barber, 2011), and balancing research and teaching as external forces (such as standards) intervene (Dinkelmann, 2011). However, teacher education policy has become "front and centre of a nation's productivity agenda" (White, 2016, p. 252). Therefore, it is timely to investigate what research has taken place around standards/accreditation policies and processes at the university level.

In a quantitative study of 370 Serbian teachers and teacher educators, Pantic and Wubbels (2010) examined teacher educators' perceptions of competencies. They defined competence as inclusive of knowledge and understanding, skills, abilities, beliefs, and values and found four distinct perceptions of teacher expertise, namely: values and child-rearing; an understanding of system requirements; subject knowledge, pedagogy, and curriculum; and self-evaluation and professional development, with the latter being the most important. Broadly speaking, these respondents were positive about the competence base for teacher education and welcomed participating in formulating the definition. This positive response was echoed in Holland where Koster and Dengerink (2008) analyzed the use of standards by teacher educators. As these teacher educators were involved in the development of the Dutch standards they had powerful feelings of ownership. They found standards helpful for individual accountability, and useful instruments for professional learning. Similarly, in Ireland, teacher

Table 1
Discourses of professional standards in the academic literature.

Developmental standards	Regulatory standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental standards (Mahony & Hextall, 2000) • Standards for quality improvement (Sachs, 2003) • Standards for professional learning or Standards for teaching (Mayer et al., 2005) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory standards (Mahony & Hextall, 2000) • Common sense standards (Sachs, 2003), Standards for quality assurance (Sachs, 2003) • Standards for certification and control (Sachs, 2003) • Standards for accountability or Standards for teachers (Mayer et al., 2005)

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6849656>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6849656>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)