

**TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF  
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE ENACTMENT OF TEACHING  
STANDARDS IN A HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOL SYSTEM**

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of  
Doctor of Education

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2 July 2016

**STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP AND SOURCES**

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. B. P.', written in a cursive style.

Dated: 2 July 2016

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr Roger Vallance, for his care, interest and generosity of time and effort in assisting me in the preparation of this thesis. I also thank my co-supervisor, Professor Tania Aspland for her advice and expertise which guided me in my research direction.

I also wish to thank Michael Addicoat, Stephen Aitken, and Chris Dutfield, whose generosity of time and keenness of insight as research assistants assisted me in validating and refining my understandings of the data collected for this thesis.

Special appreciation is extended to Dr Nicole Mockler, Dr Catherine Laws, and Associate Professor Joseph Zajda for their close, insightful, and helpful reading of the manuscript in its latter stages of development.

I am deeply grateful for the support and love of my wife Lee, whose constancy is the reason that this thesis has been brought to a conclusion.

**ABSTRACT**

The focus of this thesis is professional standards for teachers. In particular, teachers' experiences of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are addressed as one example of similar professional standards found throughout the global metropole. There is a bountiful literature on professional standards written from a theoretical perspective, but no notable international literature on practitioners' experience of professional standards and the professionalism which they enunciate. The literature review of this thesis takes a wide purview of the multiple discourses that have contributed to the genesis of professional standards. Understanding the context of professional standards thereafter allows for the problematising of professional standards and the teacher quality discourse in which they are situated. This inquiry adopted an original, multi-layered phenomenographic approach in seeking to understand the intersubjective space between teachers and professional standards. Semi-structured interviews with 71 secondary school teachers in a high performing school system formed the evidentiary base of this thesis. This was supported by a series of extended critically reflexive debriefs with a panel of peers. This generative process allowed for the construction of a phenomenographic outcome space that describes the finite number of ways in which teachers conceive professional standards. The outcome space provides the basis for the subsequent discussion of the impact of professional standards on the professional identity of teachers. The inquiry finds that the discourses of quality assurance and quality improvement dominate the arena of professional standards, and that the quality assurance discourse is seen by teachers in the current study as heavily outweighing the discourse of quality improvement. This has concomitant negative effects on the capacity of professional standards to fulfill their stated intention to improve the quality of teaching and raise its status. It further finds that while the AITSL Standards describe the epistemological dimensions of what teachers should know and be able to do, they largely ignore the ontological dimension of the human person that teachers become. This research seeks to stimulate reflection, dialogue and debate on the significance of the ontology of teaching, suggesting that the deepening of teacher ethics, by teachers and for teachers, holds the greatest promise for doing this in a way which connects the threads of teacher professional standards, teacher professionalism and teacher ontology.



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**ABBREVIATIONS**

AARE	Australian Association for Research in Education
ABCTE	American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACDE	Australian Council of Deans of Education
ACE	Australian College of Educators
ACEL	Australian College for Educational Leaders
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACSA	Australian Curriculum Studies Association
AERA	American Educational Research Association
AFTRAA	Australasian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities
AGQTP	Australian Government Quality Teacher Program
AITSL	The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
AITSL Standards	AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
BOSTES	Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards New South Wales
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CECNSW	Catholic Education Commission of New South Wales
CENet	Catholic Education Network
CEO	Catholic Education Office
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EPPI Centre	Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre
GTCE	General Teaching Council of England
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
KLA	Key Learning Area

MCEETYA	The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (now known as the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, or MCEECDYA)
NBPTS	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
NCTAF	The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future
NIQTSL	National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership
NSW	New South Wales
NSWIT	The New South Wales Institute of Teachers
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Professional Development
PL	Professional Learning
PPPR	Personnel Performance Planning and Review
SACS Board	Sydney Archdiocesan Schools Board
SES	Socio-economic status
STELLA	Standards for Teachers of English Language and Literacy
TEMAG	Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group

## CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

This study will explore teachers' experience of professional standards. The focus of the study is professional standards, particularly in teaching, and the instance being investigated is the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (hereafter 'AITSL Standards') which, nationally, superseded various state-based standards on 1 January 2013. The context of the AITSL Standards internationally, nationally, provincially and locally takes up the larger part of Chapter 1.

This thesis addresses a gap in the literature on professional standards. A major Scottish review of the international literature noted that "studies on the impact of [teacher] accreditation are almost non-existent" (Menter, Hulme, Elliot, & Lewin, 2010, p. 41). Along similar lines, an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report noted that "the topic of teaching standards and their impact is still quite new in the specialised literature" (CEPPE, 2013, p. 41). The same situation applies specifically within the Australian context in which this research is situated (Mars, 2012). While there is an increasing number of theoretical studies on the impact of professional standards, as will be seen in Chapter 2, there are few that privilege teachers' voices, an irony given that teacher professional standards are about teachers' working lives. A notable exception is doctoral work by Bourke (2011). Bourke's study examines the variety of contextual and historical factors that led to the construction of the AITSL Standards in their current form, how this has impacted on teachers, and teachers' responses to it. Bourke's work explores what has been; this study examines teachers' perceptions of teacher professional standards so as to imagine what might be to come. As such, the current study complements Bourke's research. This study seeks to enhance understanding of professional teaching standards and their possibilities by privileging teachers' voices and thus understanding teachers' conceptions of professional teaching standards. Understanding teachers' conceptions of professional standards, it will be argued, is

key to their further development and usefulness in fulfilling their dual purpose of quality assurance and quality improvement.

Within the discourse on the pursuit of quality in education, teachers are seen as central, irrespective of the perspective or context (Santoro, Reid, Mayer, & Singh, 2012). There are greater effects on student outcomes than teacher quality, for example, socio-educational disadvantage (Apple, 2004; Berliner & Glass, 2014; Clarke, 2012a; Collins, 2009; Craven, 2012; Dinham, 2013a; Whitty, 2002). Nonetheless, teacher effects have been recognised as powerful ones (Hattie, 2012), and are infinitely more appealing as a target for government policy than socio-economic reform (Parr, 2010; Thrupp, 2005b). It is in this context that professional standards for teachers have emerged in many jurisdictions in recent decades (Ramsey, 2000). Among other purposes, professional standards have been used as a strategy of neoliberal governance intended to raise the quality of teachers and teaching. The rhetoric of a drive for the greater supervision of teacher quality through quality assurance mechanisms on the one hand, and an empowerment of teachers through greater access and exhortation to attend to their own ongoing professional learning on the other, has been a feature of the broad discourse on teacher professional standards (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Thomas & Watson, 2011). The themes of quality assurance and quality improvement as drivers of professional standards are explored in Chapter 2.

Since 1 October 2004, teachers new to the profession in New South Wales (NSW) schools have been required to document 50 hours of registered and 50 hours of self-identified continuing professional development (CPD) over a five year period (NSWIT, 2011). This requirement has been continued under the AITSL Standards (NSWIT, 2012b) and is arguably the most material way in which professional standards impinge on the lives of teachers. The requirement to maintain accreditation through continuing professional learning is considered to be just one of the hallmarks of professionalism (Monteiro, 2015). The theme of professionalism in its relationship to teachers is also explored in Chapter 2.

The exploration of teachers' experience of professional standards will be undertaken through a phenomenographic critical case study methodology that is expounded in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 discusses the critical tools that are utilised in this study to understand the intersubjective space between teachers and professional standards. The intersubjective space in question is where contesting conceptions of professional standards and their purposes are formed; it is contended that the dominance of one or another of those conceptions ultimately will determine the success of professional standards in contributing to an improvement in teacher quality, widely considered to be the critical factor in improving outcomes for students (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

The phenomenographic approach is utilised to explore the intersubjective space between teachers and professional standards. The focus of Chapter 5 is the descriptions of the various categories of descriptions of professional standards that emerged from interviews with 71 secondary school teachers in a high performing school system. Section 5.9 (p. 154) reveals the phenomenographic outcome space (Figure 5.3, p. 156), representing the relationship between finite set of teacher conceptions about professional standards. The critical tools discussed in Chapter 4 are thereafter utilised in Chapter 6 to formulate a series of propositions about teachers' experience of professional standards.

Drawing on the data collected in the course of this research, the final chapter (Chapter 7) makes a judgement about the discourse that is most dominant in the teacher quality debate, and its resultant impacts on the potential of professional standards to ultimately contribute to improved student outcomes. The critical analysis of the outcome space (Figure 5.3, p. 156) is drawn to a conclusion, and a proposal for the reframing of professional standards to take account of teachers' voices on what makes the exemplary teacher is suggested. A dimension of strong teacher agency is expressed in the data as a set of ontologically-oriented teacher dispositions, which teachers themselves perceive to be missing from the AITSL Standards and, by extension, similarly constructed technical standards. The study contributes to the field in a refinement of the concept of 'active professionalism' (Sachs, 2003a) that would be

helpful in advancing teacher quality in the context of the current neoliberal ecology of education. The thesis concludes with some suggestions of how a reimagined active professionalism might manifest itself in the professional standards context and makes recommendations for further study in this field.

This thesis, while focused on the Australian national context, is situated within a broader international context of the emergence of professional standards for teachers and thus has implications that will be of interest to parties beyond Australia. Its description and analysis of teacher standards from the standpoint of the teacher offer new ways in which we might theorise about professional standards, going beyond epistemology to consider the ontology of teachers' work that may or may not be captured in standards frameworks. This thesis also significantly adds to new knowledge in the field by providing an intersection between scholarly work on policy and policy mechanisms, and the separate and seemingly unconnected work on teachers and classrooms.

## **1.2. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

For many decades, trends towards greater accountability in education have followed industrial models. These models anticipate that schools will respond to market forces of choice and competition (Robinson, 2008; Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, & Kleiner, 2000). This thinking has its antecedents in the conceptions of economist Milton Friedman who saw schools as analogous to factories taking the raw material of uneducated children and managing that material through a consistent assembly line, lock-step process to produce educated product at the other end (Torre & Voyce, 2008). In the 21st century, educationalists are increasingly coming to question whether the industrial model of schools will serve the needs of an evolving modern world (Barker, 2001; Whitby, 2011).

The rhetoric of greater accountability proposes that quality must improve. In education, this translates as the raising of standards. In a 2008 Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) public lecture, Sir Ken Robinson proffered this dry

reflection: “People say we have to raise standards as if this is a breakthrough. You know—really—yes—we should! Why would you lower them? I haven’t come across an argument that persuades me of lowering them” (Robinson, 2008, @14mins). Quality, like parenthood, is difficult to oppose. The pursuit of quality is, indeed, something of an epidemic in our society (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). Encapsulating teacher quality within teacher standards that “describe what teachers should know and be able to do” (Productivity Commission, 2012, p. 174) has gained strong international support (OECD, 2005).

The connection in the rhetoric, then, between accountability, the raising of standards and quality is clear enough. There has been a 20 year focus on quality in education in Australia (Thomas & Watson, 2011). The call for teacher standards of practice is even older, dating back to the influential Karmel Report of 1973, which proposed that:

A mark of a highly skilled occupation is that those entering it should have reached a level of preparation in accordance with standards set by the practitioners themselves, and that the continuing development of members should largely be the responsibility of the profession. (Karmel, 1973, p. 123)

The quality and standards movement has been complemented by a growing awareness that teachers and the quality of their work are the in-school factors that make the most difference to the education of school-age children (Hattie, 2009; 2015a; 2015b; Rowe, 2003). It follows, then, that the focus on quality has sharpened to the development of teacher quality. This focus has taken the form of a spotlight on developing professional standards for teachers (Dinham, 2011a; Sachs, 2011a), with Australia following the trend in other Western countries (CEPPE, 2013; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). There is a variety of views of what is meant by that quality. A brief survey of the recent history of the quality teaching agenda bears this out. For the sake of clarity, this education agenda will be referred to as the ‘quality teaching agenda’.

### **1.2.1. Global context**

An initial survey of the US and English educational contexts will be undertaken, as these large

and influential nation states continue to exercise a powerful attraction for Australian policymakers. Beyond the US and England, education policymakers are increasingly swayed by the seductive simplicity of international benchmarking from tests such as the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2010) and the Maths and Science (TIMSS) and Reading Literacy (PIRLS) assessments of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) (Mullis, Martin, & Foy, 2008a; Mullis, Martin, & Foy, 2008b; Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, & Foy, 2006). Levin (2011b) cautions that "you can't simply borrow what seems to work in Korea and apply it in Kansas" (p. 73), but consistently strong performances in PISA and TIMSS in Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, Finland and Canada have brought these countries to the attention of international scholarship. Each of these nations will also be referred to below for the sake of completeness.

#### ***1.2.1.1. The United States***

Large scale educational reform has been gathering pace for decades (Harris, 2011; Hopkins, Stringfield, Harris, Stoll, & Mackay, 2011). The reasons given for reform often relate to a perceived decline in educational standards (Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004) and the need to develop a better quality education to enable the next generation to be ready for the challenges of a 21st century globalised economy (OECD, 2005; 2010; 2011; Schleicher, 2012). In the midst of this reform has been the pursuit of teacher quality through the development of professional teaching standards. In the US, the non-partisan, non-government National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) emerged in 1987 from a recommendation of the Carnegie Foundation's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (Rotberg, Hatwood Futrell, & Lieberman, 1998). The membership of the board was broadly based, including teachers, academics, heads of professional teacher associations, politicians, business leaders, and prominent citizens. The NBPTS had a three-pronged mission:

1. to create a set of professional teaching standards;
2. to develop a certification system;
3. to advocate for educational reform and policy development. (Kelly, 2008)



The NBPTS continues to operate a voluntary set of standards that complement state teacher licensing (NBPTS, 2014). It has been described by Ingvarson and Hattie (2008) as “the most ambitious attempt by any country to establish a certification system for teachers who reach high professional standards” (p. 1). In the same year that the NBPTS was formed, the Council of Chief State Officers commenced a parallel process of developing a set of teacher competencies descriptors to guide the licensing of entry level teachers, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (Emmett, 2010). The thorough research base and critiquing of the NBPTS standards have ensured that the US experience has led other jurisdictions to head down the same path towards the development of professional teaching standards (Ingvarson & Hattie, 2008). Just over 3% of America’s teachers have gained full certification against the advanced teacher standard (NBPTS, 2014; NCES, 2015). Darling-Hammond (2008) claims that this small percentage masks the degree to which the standards have been a driver for teacher education programmes and teacher professional development.

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) was established in 1994 in an attempt to maintain momentum begun but not being realised in the professional standards reform of the NBPTS which had preceded it. The NCTAF set the “audacious goal” of providing every American child with a quality teacher and it sparked a flurry of reports and legislation in response to it (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 5). An early NCTAF report, *Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Teacher Quality*, firmly placed teaching and teacher quality at the centre of the US education reform agenda (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Among the initiatives sparked by the commission was the formation of the Teaching Commission. The Teaching Commission was a coalition taskforce of bipartisan politicians, business delegates, senior public school administrators and academics led by former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of IBM, Louis V. Gerstner, Jr.; they described the teaching profession in the US as “utterly unprepared for the 21st Century.” The Teaching Commission final report, *Teaching at Risk: Progress and Potholes*, emphasised teacher quality as the most fundamental key to progress for school education in America. Among its recommendations, it proposed that teachers required a guiding set of professional standards that would underpin teacher

preparation, compensation, certification and professional development (Gerstner, et al., 2006, p. 9).

In fidelity to a quasi-competitive market approach to education, the US federal government funded the National Council on Teacher Quality and its certification arm, the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), more than \$18 500 000 US over 2003–2004, to compete for certification with the NBPTS (United States Government Accountability Office, 2006). ABCTE has sought to fast track high quality individuals into the teaching service via alternative non-university certification, but it has not contributed significantly to the development of the professional standards agenda. Funding to disparate and not-necessarily-aligned bodies is a frequent distractor in the US teacher quality reform agenda. Fast track teacher initiatives such as *Teach for America* and duplicate systems elsewhere, such as in England, Hong Kong and Australia, have been deliberate attempts by government-backed enterprises to address teacher supply numbers or to attract brighter university graduates into teaching, but the perverse impact of such initiatives has been to in fact lower entry standards into teaching (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012). The *Teach for...* agencies are a part of the *Teach for All* network (<http://teachforall.org>) which builds its narrative on the notion of a global crisis in education. *Teach for All* references the United Nations *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* for its source of truth and strategic directions. The 2015 Report identifies teacher-student ratios, teacher ‘training’ to national standards and national student assessment instruments as the key instruments for improving educational quality (Benavot, 2015). The discourse of crisis and the emphasis on standards (Ellis, et al., 2016) are the key points to note in the context of this thesis.

#### **1.2.1.2.     *England***

The Blair government came to office in England with a mandate for educational reform and a rhetoric of improving standards. The very first White Paper of the Blair Labour government in 1997, *Excellence in Schools*, was on the subject of raising standards in education; it uses the term ‘raising standards’ profligately—71 times in a slim 77 page monograph (DfEE, 1997). In

many senses, the Blair government continued with the direction of the previous Conservative government, managing education as one would a private business driven by market forces, encouraged by policies of selective and specialist schools, school choice and league tables (Tomlinson, 2005). Labour focused on standards rather than structures (Thrupp, 2005a). This did not challenge the existing social stratification of society that results in unjust educational outcomes, but it assisted the passage of these reforms in an essentially conservative constituency.

The government's architect of change was Michael Barber, who took to the task with a theoretical perspective that pressure and support were both required in good measure to effect genuine reform (Barber & Phillips, 2000; Fullan, 2009a). This dual thrust towards school improvement mimics the twin discourses of quality assurance and quality improvement which are a feature of developments in the Australian scene and which are further discussed in Section 1.2.2 (p. 19).

The English government's Green Paper of 1998, *Teachers Meeting the Challenge of Change*, adopted the quality teacher agenda. Prime Minister Tony Blair's Foreword called for a "modern professional structure" to support teachers in the raising of standards, taking teaching "to the front rank of professions" (DfEE, 1998, p. 4). The Green Paper proposes a "new professionalism" that on the one hand accepts accountability and on the other hand takes "personal and collective responsibility for improving... skills and subject knowledge" (DfEE, 1998, p. 14). The paper further proposes a two tiered pay structure for teachers, the higher tier which would be admissible only to teachers who undertook assessments which established their level of competence above a performance threshold. The Performance Threshold Assessment was introduced in 2000 amid significant resistance from within the profession (Marsden, 2000). Conceived as a scheme to reward the best teachers and raise standards, the Performance Threshold became a part of the "low trust regime" of which league tables is the exemplar (Perryman, Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2011, p. 181).

The Performance Threshold was incorporated into a more broadly conceived Framework of Professional Standards for Teachers in 2007. The framework delineated five levels of teacher, namely:

1. Qualified Teacher Status;
2. Core;
3. Post Threshold;
4. Excellent Teacher;
5. Advanced Skills Teacher. (TDAS, 2007)

The final three levels were associated with pay increases with the final two levels requiring external assessment. The standards were designed to “provide the framework for a teacher’s career and clarify what progression looks like” (TDAS, 2007, p. 2).

The transition to a Coalition government in 2010 ensured yet more White Papers and reform. A two part independent review, conducted by a 15 member panel, 7 of whom were school practitioners, was commissioned by and presented to the government in 2011 (Coates, et al., 2011a; Coates, et al., 2011b). The *First Report of the Independent Review of Teachers’ Standards* (Coates, et al., 2011a) recommended that ‘Qualified Teacher’ Status and ‘Core’ should be subsumed into a single set of standards. This was adopted by the government and is reflected in the *Teachers’ Standards* document which came into force in September 2012 (DfE, 2012). *Teachers’ Standards* reduces the 33 and 41 elements respectively of the Qualified Teacher Status and Core levels of the former Framework to just eight elements listed under the heading of ‘Teaching’, with a further four paragraph statement about personal and professional conduct.

A 2010 government commissioned independent study that explored the elements of the ‘new professionalism’ suggested that professional standards for teachers had begun to gain some traction on the work of teachers and the task of school improvement (Walker, Jeffes, Hart, Lord, & Kinder, 2011), but this was not enough to save them. The *Second Report of the Independent Review of Teachers’ Standards* (Coates, et al., 2011b) concluded that the upper

three tiers of the 2007 Framework, namely Post Threshold, Excellent Teacher and Advanced Skills Teacher be abolished as they were “unfit for purpose” and that the 2007 framework was generally “something of a curate’s egg” (Coates, et al., 2011b, pp. 6, 16). It proposed instead a new Master Teacher standard, presented as a narrative statement, that “should be used creatively to help good teachers develop and understand where their practice—already secured on the foundation of the Teachers’ Standards—could further be improved, and also shared with colleagues” (Coates, et al., 2011b, p. 4). While the then Minister for Education indicated his government’s intention to adopt the Master Teacher standard (Gove, 2011), it was never implemented. The political reach of the standards agenda is demonstrated by the fact that it now forms a part of the Labour opposition’s education platform (Helm, 2014).

The introduction of mandatory performance management policy in 2007 (British Parliament, 2006) in concert with the *Framework of Professional Standards for Teachers* and other teacher performance management measures has come to dominate the work of school heads and has produced an often distracting “unrelenting pressure to ‘improve’” (Perryman, et al., 2011, p. 182). Thrupp puts it more bleakly as “always winter and never Christmas” (Thrupp, 2005b, p. 9). It is no small irony that an “unrelenting pressure on schools and teachers for improvement” was specifically and unambiguously identified as a core value of Education policy in the Blair government’s first Education White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE, 1997, p. 11; see also Tomlinson, 2005).

It is yet to be seen what impact the 2012 rationalisation of the professional standards for teachers will have. Contrary to the rhetoric of a new professionalism, the reforms have been accused of managerialising the work of school heads and disempowering and narrowing the role of teachers (Evans, 2011; Merson, 2000; M. Thompson, 1999; Tomlinson, 2005). While the work of the 2011 independent reviews was conducted by practitioners and educational experts, the results of their work was that the at-arm’s-distance work of the General Teaching Council of England (GTCE) ceased and its work was taken up by a new body, the Teaching Agency, subsequently merged in 2013 with the National College to form the National College for Teaching and Leadership, a direct agency for the Department of Education.

Following bipartisan political discussion and independent work published by The Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI, 2014) and the Royal College of Surgeons (Leslie, 2013), the Coalition government showed some appetite for supporting a new independent College of Teaching with the publication of a consultation paper, *A World-class Teaching Profession* (DfE, 2014). A number of teacher organisations subsequently formed the Claim Your College coalition which published a proposal for a chartered professional body (Claim Your College, 2015). The College of Teaching came into being in October 2015 under a new Conservative government. The College of Teaching seeks to take charge of professional standards in five areas: subject content knowledge; pedagogical content; professional skills; contribution to the profession; and leadership (PTI, 2014). It remains to be seen whether control of professional standards can be wrested from the government's agencies.

#### **1.2.1.3.     *Hong Kong***

Rapid education reform has taken place in Hong Kong with seven major reforms taking place between 2000 and 2006. As a result, "the education sector in Hong Kong is suffering from initiative overload, change related chaos and some cynicism on the part of hard pressed principals and teachers" (Kwok Pak Keung, 2011, p. 24). In its dizzying pace of reform, Hong Kong mirrors the broader international experience of recent decades. Among the reforms are newly established teacher standards that have placed considerable pressure on Hong Kong teachers to alter their pedagogy from teacher- to student-centred. A point of note with respect to the Hong Kong context is that it is a highly segregated education system that exacerbates the link between low socio-economic status and poor educational outcomes. Overall strong results documented in the PISA 2009 report (OECD, 2010), mask the big gap between educational haves and have-nots in the Hong Kong system (Kwok Pak Keung, 2011).

#### **1.2.1.4.     *Finland***

High status, teacher autonomy and quality working conditions have attracted high academic achievers into teaching in Finland (Fullan, 2009b; A. Hargreaves, 2011; Sahlberg, 2012). In 2010, only one out of ten applicants was successful in winning a primary teacher university

course place. The huge choice of teacher candidates allows Finnish authorities to make fine-grained selection of teacher candidates, which is done, in part, based on the candidate's ability to articulate the core mission of Finnish public education (OECD, 2011). This focus on the affective domain is in stark contrast to the direction in England, discussed above, which has seen the affective domain largely written out of the latest iteration of their professional standards for teachers.

Finnish educational success confounds policy-makers in other countries because it does not rely on high stakes accountability, but rather on a “positive culture of *trust, cooperation* and *responsibility*” (Hargreaves, Halasz, & Pont, 2007, p. 16, emphasis in original). There is not even a Finnish word for accountability—they speak rather of “collective responsibility” (Hargreaves & Dennis, 2009, p. 30). Finnish teachers have fewer face to face teaching hours than the OECD average, but they also have greater responsibility for the design of curriculum at the local level, with a commensurate strong degree of teacher agency (Sahlberg, 2012). A significant feature of the Finnish education system is its use of collective responsibility and the building of social capital within school communities, rather than reliance on externally imposed accountabilities (Sahlberg, 2010b).

#### **1.2.1.5. *Singapore***

Singapore is included in this review not because of its orientation to teacher professional standards, but rather because it is so often cited as an exemplar of best practice in teaching (Jensen, 2012) and therefore cannot be easily ignored. Singapore's differences, however, from the more common neoliberal educational ecologies such as those in Australia, England and the United States, make it a poor point of comparison. This section will outline the Singaporean system sufficiently to clarify its unique context, while also highlighting its focus on the importance of values in its selection and education of teacher candidates.

The Singaporean context is similar to the Finnish one in as much as it selects a highly capable candidature for teaching at university entry level. Only the top one third of school graduands

are considered for teaching, with selected candidates placed on attractive stipends before they even leave school. Three years into their teaching career, teachers are assessed for different teaching career pathways and thereafter offered “a coherent and comprehensive system of teacher appraisal and progression” (OECD, 2011, p. 48; see also Tan, 2012). Public investment in education in Singapore is second only to spending on defence and teachers are afforded 100 hours of government sponsored professional development each year (A. Hargreaves, 2012). Together, these elements create a strong “culture of effort” (Gopinathan, 2012, p. 68). The National Institute of Education—the sole teacher education institute in the nation state—makes teacher values and dispositions central to teacher education preparation through its Values-Skills-Knowledge framework (Goodwin, 2012). Values are also central to the work of the government-sponsored, teacher-led Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST, 2012).

Indeed, a particularity of Singaporean Education is that all teachers are a part of a single system from which teachers are centrally assigned to schools (OECD, 2011). This tightly controlled environment obviates virtually all of the issues of inequality and inconsistency that are associated with multiple sector systems around the world which are diverse and uneven, Australia included (see Preston, 2011). This single fact also highlights the incomparability of Singapore with such countries, where political, social and religious realities make the achieving of a single unified system impossible.

#### **1.2.1.6. *South Korea***

To an even greater extent than Finland and Singapore, South Korea recruits teachers from the top echelon of high school students, drawing from just the top 5%; this was the factor that prompted the English to quote the Korean example in their own search for quality improvement (DfEE, 2010). Teacher appraisal is among the most frequent in OECD countries (OECD, 2011) and is measured against clearly defined standards (DfEE, 2010). Rates of teacher involvement in CPD are double the OECD average (OECD, 2009). The system of identification of teacher leaders is also sophisticated, with leaders being identified at



preservice level. Teacher status is very high in South Korea and teachers are paid at a level above the average of other university graduates. The system is also able to direct teachers towards high needs schools with attractive pay incentives (Schleicher, 2012).

South Korea is often cited as a high performing country, achieving top results in PISA (OECD, 2010) and TIMSS (Mullis, et al., 2008a; Mullis, et al., 2008b). Indeed, in five decades, South Korea has moved from an agrarian backwater to an economic powerhouse (Kim & Lee, 2010), responsive to the Ministry of Education's motto: "Education is the nation's strength to compete" (cited in Tang, 2011, p. 111). South Korea has some features in common with the high performing Finland and Singapore, including an absence of professional standards (CEPPE, 2013). Internal factors, however, mask the reality behind its strong performance on international tests that would otherwise present South Korea as best practice.

Despite its positives, South Korea experiences relatively poor teacher-student relationships compared to other nations, with low teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy (OECD, 2009); evidence would suggest that these negatives bear a strong relationship with the extremely competitive nature of South Korean education (Levin & Fullan, 2009). Competitiveness stems historically from the limited number of middle school graduates who were able to gain a place in high school immediately prior to 1973—just 40% (Lee, Lee, & Jang, 2010). In that year the government introduced the high school equalisation policy. The policy created equality across high schools by abolishing high school entrance exams and balloting students to different schools thus removing schools' ability to hand-pick the best students, and by standardising teachers' salaries and curricula (Kim & Lee, 2010). The policy created the kind of equality across schools (Kim & Lee, 2010) that is the hallmark of the Finnish system, but it did not reduce competitiveness; competitiveness was simply transferred along the line to competitiveness for high status, selective university places (Lee, et al., 2010).

In response to high competitiveness, out-of-school tutoring—referred to in the literature as shadow education—has grown at rates beyond that found in other education contexts around

the world (Kim & Lee, 2010). The well developed shadow education market in South Korea consists of private tutoring, institutionalised “cram schools” known as *hakwons* and correspondence/online offerings (Lee, et al., 2010, p. 97). Household expenditure on shadow education amounts to the equivalent of 80% of government spending on public education. So pervasive is the undermining effect of shadow education that the South Korean government has undertaken repeated reforms in an attempt to stamp it out (Lee, et al., 2010); despite their efforts, household spending has increased above the rate of income growth and the number of *hakwons* increased by 3600% (sic) between 1980 and 2000. High spending on shadow education correlates closely to high academic performance, reinforcing societal inequalities (Kim & Lee, 2010). It is these extraordinary figures, combined with the known psychological harm associated with such a high stakes, high stress system (Lee, et al., 2010) that leads one to doubt the usefulness of the South Korean experience for learnings in other quarters.

#### **1.2.1.7. Canada**

It is something of a misnomer to speak of a Canadian education system. The federal government has no involvement in public education, which is the responsibility of provincial governments (Levin, 2010; Fullan, 2009b). The focus here will be on Ontario, as that province has undergone a considerable period of reform from 1995 until the present. It is worthy of note, also, that work in Ontario heavily informed the Ramsey Report (2000) into teacher quality in NSW, discussed in Section 1.2.3 (p. 29).

The first period of reform was under the Conservative government from 1995 until 2003 (Fullan, 2009b). The period was marked by conflict between government and the profession and a negative discourse about teachers was established by government in the public debate, justifying a substantially reduced public education budget. Teacher staffing levels were decreased and workloads were increased. Compulsory global teacher professional development was introduced, as was a system of intensive teacher evaluation through a government assessment agency. The period witnessed low teacher morale and loss of

confidence in public education evidenced through an enrolment drift to private schools. “In short, nobody was happy” (Levin, 2010, p. 311).

In 2003, the incoming Liberal government set an ambitious education reform agenda. Fullan (2005) described the election of the incoming government as “a golden opportunity to swim in deeper waters” (p. xii). As chief education adviser to the new government (Caldwell, 2011), Fullan was a member of the “guiding coalition” that was “well qualified and courageous” (Barber, 2010, p. 268) and was to have significant impact on the direction and success of the educational reforms, which took heed of the successes and failures of the previous six years of Blair’s education reform in England (Fullan, 2005).

The Ontario strategy set just a few highly specific focus areas for improvement—literacy, numeracy and high school drop-out rates, and set about negotiating aspirational targets for them, supported by a strong, financially-backed process of capacity building within the teaching profession (Fullan, 2006; Levin, 2010). ‘Distractors’ such as pay and conditions were attended to so that they did not take focus from the nominated target areas (Levin, 2010). High levels of transparency and engagement of teachers in the process were two features of the theory of action that was put into place in Ontario after 2003 (Fullan, 2009a, p. 6). Fullan also reflectively writes of the importance of coherence between the three actors in the process of reform, namely, government, the school district and schools themselves (Fullan, 2009b)—“connecting the dots” (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2009, p. 14) so that all actors understood the bigger picture and played their part in staying the course and sustaining growth.

The Ontario strategies for capacity building rejected the notion of disparate one day workshops for teachers. The realisation from experience was that “what really counts is what happens ‘in between workshops’” where teachers teach teachers (Fullan, 2011c, p. 2). Thus, professional development honed in on developing professional learning communities at the district and school level. A collaborative culture “focused on developing educator commitment and competence” was built (Fullan, 2011b, p. 12; see also OECD, 2011).

Research evidence supports Fullan's assertion (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, & Beatty, 2010), as it does the development of a strong pattern of distributed leadership that is world leading (Leithwood, et al., 2009). Alma Harris succinctly captures the essence of the transformation in school reform in Ontario post 2003:

Respect for professionals is central to the success of the approach to change in Ontario, as well as coherence and alignment through national and local partnership (Harris, 2010, p. 199).

#### 1.2.1.7.1. Ontario Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

The Ontario College of Teachers was established in 1997, on the recommendation of a Royal Commission established by the previous leftist government. Established as a self-regulating body, the Ontario College of Teachers is nonetheless under some political influence, as just over a third of its governing council membership is appointed by the legislature (Basu, 2004; Ontario College of Teachers, 2015). Unlike the fate of similar bodies in England and in the Australian federal jurisdiction, however, the College was maintained and its support extended after the change of government in 2003, providing the level of necessary long-term stability to support sustainable change (Levin, 2010). The College published its *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* document in 1999, and it was revised and first republished in 2006.

The stated purposes of the standards are:

- to inspire a shared vision for the teaching profession;
- to identify the values, knowledge and skills that are distinctive to the teaching profession;
- to guide the professional judgment and actions of the teaching profession;
- to promote a common language that fosters an understanding of what it means to be a member of the teaching profession. (Ontario College of Teachers, 2011)

There are five domains to the Standard:

- commitment to students and student learning;
- professional knowledge;
- professional practice;
- leadership in learning communities;

- ongoing professional learning.

Each of the five domains offers a single paragraph which seeks to broadly describe that dimension of teachers' work. In addition, the Ontario standards make specific reference to ethical qualities expected of the teacher. In this respect, the Ontario standards are far more like the unimplemented Master Teacher standard in England than the professional standards for teachers from AITSL which are discussed in Section 1.2.2.6 (p. 27). The College intentionally embeds the standards in additional qualification courses. The standards are not a performance appraisal tool, but rather a framework against which teachers can reflect on their teaching and design a plan for their own professional learning (Cumming & Jasman, 2003; Ontario College of Teachers, 2011). The Ontario school improvement context and the professional teaching standards which have emerged out of it most closely resemble the conditions in the Australian context, to which we now turn.

### **1.2.2. Australian national context**

The proposition that teacher professional standards would contribute to improvements in teacher quality has a genesis in Australian political life that originated in the 1980s (Mowbray, 2005). The call for a national teaching council that would operate as an arm of the profession itself was a key recommendation of a broadly represented major education conference in Melbourne in 1992, seeking action on the recommendations of the Karmel Report of nearly 20 years earlier (Karmel, 1973). A National Teaching Council was indeed established in 1994, but quickly met its demise with the change of federal government in 1997 (Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2006). The subsequent Australian story of the quest for influence and control of the quality teaching agenda is one of contested ground between a desire for quality assurance and the desire for quality improvement. The former has generally been the preoccupation of government; the latter the preoccupation of the professional associations, mimicking the situation found in other jurisdictions (Koster & Dengerink, 2008; Mausethagen & Granlund, 2012; Swennen, 2013).

The movement towards the development of professional teaching standards in Australia was heavily influenced by the US experience outlined in Section 1.2.1.1 (p. 6). Other factors also bore influence, for example, the extensive development of competencies in vocational education (Mowbray, 2005). The dominance of neoliberalism in the global metropole, with its confident belief in the power of market forces (Connell, 2010), has had far greater influence, giving rise to an audit culture (Power, 1997), readily identifiable in the education sector (Connell, 2009). With respect to students, it was believed that outputs could be measured by standardised testing; the quantum of standardised tests that students complete each year has been expanded in Australia with the introduction of national testing in 2008 (ACARA, 2008). With respect to teachers, it was believed that professional standards would serve to measure teacher contributions to educational outcomes. In an audit culture, teachers are conceived as living in an unambiguous world where they are compliant officers answerable according to the simple input/output variables of the teaching process (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). Needless to say, this perspective on teaching quality was and is a key dimension of the strongly contested ground on quality teaching. Particularly prior to the election of the federal Labor government in Australia in 2007, the quality teaching agenda was a “three-cornered contest involving the federal government, the state and territory governments, and professional associations of teachers and school leaders” (Thomas & Watson, 2011, p. 191).

#### ***1.2.2.1. Federal government action on the Quality Teaching Agenda***

On the government front, the following initiatives can be highlighted:

- In 1998, *A Class Act: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession* emerged from the Senate (Senate of the Australian Parliament, 1998), hereafter *A Class Act*, proposing a national standard for teachers and a concomitant registration body.
- The federal government followed with the publication of *Teachers for the 21st Century: Making the Difference*, hereafter *Teachers for the 21st Century*, in 2000.

One element of its focus was to raise quality through “targeted professional development” and “enhancing professional standards” (DEETYA, 2000, p. 3).

- The Australian Government Quality Teacher Program (AGQTP) was one of the responses to *Teachers for the 21st Century*, partly focused on further developing teacher professional standards as a means of improving teacher quality.
- In 2001 The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) formed the Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce to provide advice to the Ministerial Council on professional standards for teachers and principals (MCEETYA Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce, 2003).
- Another federal government report followed in 2003, *Australia’s Teachers, Australia’s Future – Advancing Innovation, Science Technology and Mathematics*, hereafter *Australia’s Teachers* (Dow & Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, 2003). Among its recommendations was a call for national standards that described different stages of teacher development, a template upon which later manifestations of standards came to be based (Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2006).
- In 2004 Federal Minister for Education Brendan Nelson launched the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSL) (B. Nelson, 2004). NIQTSL followed up with papers and an influential conference in 2005 (Hayes, 2006).
- In 2006, MCEETYA established a new taskforce, the Improving Teacher Quality and School Leadership Capacity Working Group which was charged with the task of developing a national framework for professional standards for teachers (Thomas & Watson, 2011).
- NIQTSL morphed into Teaching Australia—the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership in 2006. Its further morphing was accompanied by its name being shortened to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School

Leadership in 2010 (Australian Government, 2015). Teaching Australia was originally envisaged as a unifying national body to advance the teaching profession. It sought to consult widely within the profession itself, consistent with the intentions stated in *Teachers for the 21st Century* five years previously.

Established by government as an independent company, nonetheless its sole member is the Federal Minister for Education (AITSL, 2015c). The company is under the control of the Minister, as the constitution of the company makes clear: “It is the duty of each Director to comply with any general or specific direction in respect of the business, affairs or property of the Company given in writing by the Member of the Company” (AITSL, 2015c, p. 19). This is a prime example of an institution presenting itself as independent of political power, but in reality being deeply contingent upon it (Chomsky & Foucault, 1971/2006).

- In 2008 Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Education Minister Julia Gillard released *Quality Education: The Case for an Education Revolution in our Schools*, hereafter *Quality Education* (Rudd & Gillard, 2008). This policy document reflects a deficiency model of teacher quality in its stated priority of “raising the quality of teaching in our schools” (2008, p. 13). It is also unambiguous in stating that its focus is on accountability. *Quality Education* gave rise to significant funding for disadvantaged schools under National Partnerships Smarter Schools Agreements (Australian Government, 2010), but these monies were heavily tied to the kinds of neoliberal audit and accountability structures that are discussed in Section 2.4 (p. 39).
- In February 2014, the Federal Minister for Education and Training Christopher Pyne constituted the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) to investigate teacher quality through attention to initial teacher education. The TEMAG report, *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers*, hereafter *Action Now* was released one year later. TEMAG had its genesis in the government’s *Students First* policy. The first of the four elements of the *Students First* policy is teacher quality. The policy claims that “the first step to achieving a quality education,



which is so critical for the future of young Australians and our nation, is to lift the quality, professionalisation and status of the teaching profession” (DET, 2015, n.p.). Pyne explained his reasons for appointing TEMAG in crisis terms: to arrest the decline in Australian student performance in international testing. The “best way to improve student performance,” he claimed, “is to improve teaching quality” (Pyne, 2015, p. 7). The government’s formal response to *Action Now* (Australian Government, 2015) divided the TEMAG into five themes, the first of which was “stronger quality assurance of teacher education courses” (2015, p. 4). This first theme was rapidly addressed by AITSL with its introduction of another set of standards—the National Program Standards for initial teacher education courses (AITSL, 2015b).

Thomas and Watson (2011) analyse the discourse in *Teachers for the 21st Century* (2000) and *Australia’s Teachers* (2003). They also examine the AGQTP highlights reports published in 2007 and 2008 by The Curriculum Corporation, a company owned by MCEETYA. They identify two distinct discourses; one discourse that focuses on quality improvement and a second discourse that focuses on quality assurance. While elements of both discourses are evident in *Teachers for the 21st Century* and the 2007 AGQTP highlights document, nonetheless, overall, “a regulatory discourse of quality assurance dominates” (Thomas & Watson, 2011, p. 194). *A Class Act* shared the same emphasis (Sachs, 2003b). The reverse is true of *Australia’s Teachers* and the 2007 AGQTP highlights document, where the discourse is dominated by a concern with quality improvement (Thomas & Watson, 2011, p. 194). The most recent documents, the 2008 *Quality Education* and the 2015 *Action Now* are dominated by a quality assurance discourse (Clarke, 2012a; Mayer, 2014).

This evidence points to significant tension in the period from 2000–2015, between the contesting purposes of professional standards, a tension that had already been noted by the Australian College of Educators (ACE) at their 2002 national meeting on teacher standards (ACE, 2002). On the one hand, standards were seen as providing the guiding principles to assist teachers in better understanding their work and how they might deepen their

professionalism. On the other hand, professional standards were seen to hold the promise of operating as the measure against which teacher credentialing could be established—essentially a teacher accountability system. The tension had not been resolved on the eve of the release of a set of national professional standards for teachers by AITSL. In their submission on the draft standards, the Australian College for Educational Leaders (ACEL) makes the comment that “ACEL is not entirely clear on the use and purpose of the document” (Crowther, Mandile, Hill, Lewis, & MacDermott, 2010). ACEL’s contribution to the debate about professional standards was at the end of a long contribution by the teacher and teacher leadership professional associations, the relevant elements of which are discussed in the following section.

#### **1.2.2.2. Professional associations on the Quality Teaching Agenda**

Several peak teaching and school leadership professional bodies responded to *Teachers for the 21st Century* with a national forum in 2000, under the auspices of ACE, the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) and the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE). Out of this forum emerged the discussion paper, *Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms: A National Discussion Paper*, hereafter *Standards of Professional Practice* (Mackay, ACE, ACSA, & AARE, 2000). Teaching Australia commissioned a study in 2006 to investigate the variety of professional standards that were being developed by the professional associations; various separate frameworks were reported across 16 different subject areas. In the main the standards were “designed to assist teachers to understand and develop their own practice” (Hayes, 2006, p. 2). Professional standards frameworks were developed for both teachers and school leaders. When the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) investigated the proliferation of attempts at developing professional leadership standards in education in 2009, they found more than 60 separate frameworks being used in a variety of contexts (Dinham, 2011b). The National Mapping of Teacher Professional Learning Project noted the significant degree to which the myriad of professional-association-developed standards had evolved to enable teachers to discuss and reflect on their professional practice (Doecke, et al., 2008). That is to

say, the dominant discourse from the professional associations was one of quality improvement. In the view of Darling-Hammond (2008), teachers taking control over standards-setting is a powerful mechanism for the professionalisation of teaching. Work in Australia on Standards for Teachers of English Language and Literacy (STELLA) is an example of where teacher developed standards have been shown, albeit in embryonic ways, to have considerable potential for impact on teacher professional learning and practice (Meiers, 2006; 2007).

### **1.2.2.3. *Contested discourses between government and professional teacher and school leader associations***

The first key element (of four) in *Teachers for the 21st Century* was the government's engagement of ACE "to assist with a national forum on professional teaching standards" (DEETYA, 2000, p. 3). As has been seen in Section 1.2.2.1 (p. 23), the dominant discourse of *Teachers for the 21st Century* was quality assurance. The key concern of ACE was in quality improvement, evidenced by the dominance of this discourse in *Standards of Professional Practice*. The document exhorts the profession not to be distracted from the "main game" of developing a critical mass of excellent practitioners and for any emerging standards to be identified by and "owned by the profession" itself (Mackay, et al., 2000, p. 5). It can be seen from this example that the professional body named as a key stakeholder and facilitator of change in *Teachers for the 21st Century* was in fact on a different trajectory to the government that sought its assistance, a typical scenario in education reform in the global metropole (Hannay, Bray, & Telford, 2005). This once more highlights the tensions that existed in the discourses about standards in the period. It also reflects the reality that teaching is ensconced in an era where governments, internationally, believe they can shape the professions:

The late-1980s marked the onset of what may reasonably be called the 'new professionalism' era. Widespread public sector reforms, delineating generally sweeping changes to the ways in which people carry out their jobs, were at the top of the 'standards agenda' set by most developed countries. Before long, analysts of this or that occupational community began to pepper their arguments with the language of the sociology of professions, imbuing the discourse of the day with terms such as 'deprofessionalisation', 'proletarianisation',

and ‘new professionalism’. The educational research community was no exception. Analysts of both the compulsory and post-compulsory sectors variously lamented the loss of autonomy that they equated with a dilution of professionalism, issued rally calls to practitioners to regain the initiative by seizing the opportunity to redefine their own professionalism or described a new professionalism that they claimed would evolve—or was already evolving—within the new economic and political conditions that had prompted societal and systemic change. Yet no matter what its focus or tone, each such commentary or analysis was predicated on an underlying premise: that governments, through their policies and directives, can shape professionalisms. (Evans, 2011, p. 851)

#### **1.2.2.4. *Business on the quality teaching agenda***

In 2008, the Business Council of Australia issued a publication entitled, *Teaching Talent: The Best Teachers for Australia’s Classroom*, the main part of which was a paper prepared by academics working out of ACER (Dinham, Ingvarson, & Kleinhenz, 2008). The dominant discourse of this paper was quality assurance, discussing professional standards from the standpoint of their capacity to underpin a national certification system and a reformed remuneration system for teachers. Some scholars have argued that education in Australia is deeply embedded within the government’s productivity agenda, an agenda originating out of capitalist business interests (Mulcahy, 2011). This is a phenomenon experienced in other national contexts where neoliberal ideology dominates, for example, in the UK (Coffield, 2007; Wolf, 2002) and the US (Apple, 2006; Taubman, 2009). The import of neoliberal ideology for this research, with its attendant audit culture and proliferation of standards, will be discussed in Chapter 2.

#### **1.2.2.5. *Emerging consensus on the quality teaching agenda***

Teaching Australia was the forerunner to AITSL (Section 1.2.2.1, p. 21) and was composed of members of the various professional teacher and school leader professional peak bodies. The desire of teacher and school leadership professional associations to keep the quality teaching agenda in their own hands is evident in the *Charter for the Australian Teaching Profession*, developed by Teaching Australia with the assistance of over 30 professional associations,

which stated that “we take responsibility for the development and renewal of our profession” (Teaching Australia, 2008, p. 1). More recent policy directions, however, have wrested this desire for control of the profession and the quality teaching agenda from the professional associations.

Following the election of the federal Labor government in Australia in 2007, a significant change in policy direction was evidenced with the transition of Teaching Australia into AITSL in early 2010. Without a member base, the demise of Teaching Australia was not strongly contested. While AITSL took over the reins of government driven agenda from Teaching Australia, its board membership was quite different. It comprised of representatives of employing government educational authorities in the eight states and territories, as well as Catholic and Independent school employer representatives, union and professional organisations representatives. These were groups that had been excluded from the makeup of Teaching Australia, a fact which no doubt contributed to the multitude of forks in standards development that emerged in the period 2000–2009.

Consensus may well have been coming anyway: Dinham (2008a) sensed the emergence of a “coalition of the willing” prepared to take forward the professional standards agenda in a cooperative and productive way (p. 8). Under the influence of the federalising Council of Australian Governments (COAG), government at both state and federal level came to more directly drive education policy direction. In 2008, MCEETYA published a communique from their 22nd meeting endorsing the reform agenda of COAG. The communique set out a series of strategies designed to realise the reform agenda. One of them was a national partnership for quality teaching, reinforcing the ongoing centrality of quality in the public discourse on teaching (MCEETYA, 2008).

#### **1.2.2.6.     *The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers framework***

AITSL contends that their teacher professional standards have the potential to guide (BOSTES, 2015a), drive (AITSL, 2011), recognise (AITSL, 2014e), and reward (AITSL,

2014f) teachers in their work, providing teachers with satisfying careers that will sustain them through long years in the classroom. AITSL draws on research that proposes an even-handed attendance to the dual purposes of professional standards to address both quality assurance and quality improvement (Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 2000). The AITSL Standards were implemented in all Australian education jurisdictions in January 2013 (AITSL, 2012d). From that point, education authorities and the schools with which they work have been invited to consider how the AITSL Standards can further the quality teaching agenda. There is no current certainty that the AITSL Standards will have an impact on the profession in Australia (Dinham, 2012a).

Unlike the UK and Ontario teacher professional standards, the AITSL Standards did not follow the *Standards of Professional Practice* discussion paper recommendation that teacher standards should be “described in continuous prose” and avoid “lists of individual ‘behaviourist’ or ‘check list’ outcomes” (Mackay, et al., 2000, p. 10). Rather, the AITSL Standards present a taxonomy of 34 descriptors gradated across four career stages, producing a total of 136 outcomes, identified in three domains of professional knowledge, practice and engagement. The AITSL Standards belong to the lineage of an earlier iteration of the English standards which were in force from 2007 until 2012. These earlier English standards described five career stages on a linear scale, identifying 108 outcomes across three domains of professional attributes, knowledge and skills (TDAS, 2007). The 2007 English standards were deemed “broadly unfit for purpose” in the second report of a 2011 government appointed independent review (Coates, et al., 2011b, p. 6). The critique of the independent review was that the higher level standards provided only “uninspiring ‘nudges’ from one level of the framework to the next” through the use of adjectival modifiers. Consequently, they failed to provide “an aspirational statement of what it is to be an outstanding practitioner” (Coates, et al., 2011b, p. 16). An example of this can be seen in the Core level professional knowledge descriptor of “a *secure* knowledge and understanding of their subjects/curriculum areas [Standard C15, emphasis added]” (TDAS, 2007, p. 17) compared to “a *more developed* knowledge and understanding of their subjects/curriculum areas [Standard P5, emphasis

added]” at the Post-Threshold level (TDAS, 2007, p. 23). This kind of taxonomic progression is precisely the way in which the AITSL Standards are constructed, an example of policy borrowing in Australia from the US via the UK (Whitty, 2012). This policy borrowing occurred in the early 2000s, in the formation of the NSW professional standards, out of which the AITSL Standards evolved (NSWIT, 2004).

AITSL’s *Statement of Intent* cites “an effective system of certification of highly accomplished and lead teachers,” and the development and dissemination of “support materials for feedback, observation and professional learning,” as two key commitments, underpinned by the AITSL Standards (AITSL, 2015e, n.p.). These two commitments demonstrate AITSL’s dual interest in both the quality assurance and the quality improvement discourses, although AITSL’s advice about the implementation of the AITSL Standards focuses heavily on a discourse of quality assurance (AITSL, 2012d). The long gestation period of the AITSL Standards and the mandated nature of the lower two career stages has begun to mediate teachers own perceptions of their work. AITSL has determined that certification at higher levels will be voluntary (AITSL, 2012c). It is not yet clear, however, whether the AITSL Standards will gain traction at the higher two voluntary career stages of Highly Accomplished and Lead. An indicator of the lack of acceptance of voluntary accreditation is the fact that only 0.04% of NSW teachers have gained it, even though voluntary accreditation has been available since 2008. The national picture is similar. These figures have been calculated by the researcher, derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics data and data gathered under Freedom of Information laws. The calculations are detailed in Appendix A.

### **1.2.3. New South Wales context**

In 2000, only Queensland and South Australia had teacher registration boards (Ramsey, 2000). Today, all states and territories have them (BOSTES, 2015; Queensland College of Teachers, 2015; Teacher Quality Institute Australian Capital Territory, 2015; Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory, 2012; Teachers Registration Board of South Australia, 2015; Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania, 2015; Victorian Institute of

Teaching, 2015; Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia, 2015). From 2005, they have operated with New Zealand within an Australasian federation, the Australasian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities (AFTRAA) (Thomas & Watson, 2011). AFTRAA liaised closely with MCEETYA, ensuring that groundwork for the AITSL Standards had well and truly been laid by the many years of tilling the soil by the state and territory bodies who were proffering their own versions of teacher professional standards. Thus, when the state and territory bodies moved to the use of the AITSL Standards in January 2013, it was in effect a refinement of existing structures rather than a radical departure from current practice. It is through the state and territory authorities that the national professional standards will be most obviously and publicly utilised.

#### ***1.2.3.1. The New South Wales Institute of Teachers***

Professional standards for teachers found life in NSW through the NSW Institute of Teachers. The proposal for a NSW Institute of Teachers had its origins in the report of the review of teacher education, *Quality Matters: Revitalising Teaching: Critical Times, Critical Choices*, hereafter *Quality Matters* (Ramsey, 2000). *Quality Matters* imagined a statutory professional organisation after the manner of those existing in accountancy, law, medicine, social work and engineering to further the pursuit of teacher quality in NSW. The NSW Institute of Teachers came into being in 2004 following two years of consultation with employer authorities, professional associations, union, and parent bodies conducted by the Interim Committee for a NSW Institute of Teachers. By the time of the establishment of the Institute, a draft professional teaching standards framework had already been developed by the Interim Committee (Tebbutt, 2004). The NSW Institute of Teachers required that all teachers who entered the profession after 1 October 2004 be accredited against the professional standards framework, and that they undertake mandatory ongoing professional development. These teachers became known as ‘New Scheme’ teachers. Through its system of accreditation and requirement for maintenance of accreditation through ongoing professional development, the NSW Institute addressed both the quality assurance and the quality improvement agendas. Effective from 1 January 2014, the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards



(BOSTES) dissolved the NSW Institute of Teachers and adopted the Institute's responsibilities (NSWIT, 2014).

The standards framework against which new teachers' competence is now measured in NSW is the AITSL Standards, which in 2013 superseded the Institute of Teachers developed Professional Teaching Standards Framework (NSWIT, 2014). The AITSL Standards largely mirror the NSW Professional Teaching Standards (NSWIT, 2012b; 2012c). Teachers have three years in which to gain Proficient Teacher<sup>1</sup> status (BOSTES, 2015b; NSWIT, 2006); having established their credentials as a teacher, they thereafter have an obligation to complete and log 100 hours of professional development each five year period in order to maintain their accreditation.

While the opportunity for voluntary accreditation at higher levels of competency has been available to all NSW teachers since 2008 (NSWIT, 2009), the NSW Institute of Teachers made no attempt to accredit NSW teachers who were in service prior to 1 October 2004. The dissolution of the under-resourced NSW Institute of Teachers into BOSTES, however, provided an opportunity for increased action around teacher accreditation. In 2012, the NSW Education Minister commissioned a discussion paper entitled *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning* (Bruniges, Lee, & Alegounarias, 2012), developed into a policy blueprint document of the same name one year later (Bruniges, Lee, & Alegounarias, 2013). *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning* established a policy direction for the NSW government to mandate accreditation against the AITSL Standards for all teachers by 2018 (NSW Government, 2014).

The preceding sections have outlined the Australian and New South Wales context for this study, the nation and state from which each of the case study schools are drawn. It has been seen that a range of discourses contested the debating ground in the lead-up to the construction of the AITSL Standards, with the dominant discourses being quality assurance, a

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1. Proficient Teacher status, the second career stage in the AISTL Standards, is equivalent to the Professional Competence status of the superseded NSW Professional Teaching Standards Framework.

focus of government, and quality improvement, a focus of professional associations. It has also been seen that many versions of professional standards preceded the AITSL Standards, but ultimately AITSL and the professional standards that now exist in AITSL's name are the result of control of the teaching profession and its agenda being assumed by COAG, the coalition of Australian federal and state governments. Steered by government policymaking since 2008 in NSW, the NSW Institute of Teachers, now BOSTES, has commanded the implementation of professional standards in the state in which this research took place, introducing a mandatory accreditation scheme applying to all teachers from 2018.

#### **1.2.4. Context of the researcher**

I am a principal of a Catholic secondary school within the Archdiocese of Sydney. Previous to this, I held the position of Deputy Principal at an independent Catholic secondary school, where I had particular responsibility for the implementation of the annual program of teacher professional development. In this role, I was exposed to dealing with the increased levels of professional development accountability for teachers new to the profession, brought about by the establishment of the NSW Institute of Teachers. Both schools have New Scheme teachers on the staff who are subject to the mandatory requirements of teacher accreditation against the AITSL Standards. My roles at both schools have seen me heavily involved in strategic planning for improvement. I have seen teacher professional standards become a part of the teaching profession's landscape. One of my tasks within the context of day-to-day school life is to attempt to leverage the AITSL Standards Framework in the service of school improvement.

### **1.3. THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM**

Teachers face pressure from increased levels of accountability to maintain their professional status. The strong accountability context of the AITSL Standards places one of their stated aims—the quality improvement of teachers—at risk. There is an apparent dissonance between the accountability that others want of teachers and the improvement agenda that teachers want for themselves, the latter desire expressed through the various discourses on professional

standards that have emerged from teacher professional associations. In either case, it is not clear how classroom teachers themselves conceive professional standards, that is to say, it is not clear what mental frames they have to rationalise, connect to, and understand the purpose of standards in relation to their work. Nor is it clear how classroom teachers negotiate the contesting discourses evident in the AITSL Standards. Furthermore, AITSL claims that professional standards will guide, drive, recognise and reward teachers (Section 1.2.2.6, p. 27). At the least, however, the reluctance of teachers to take up voluntary professional standards accreditation suggests that classroom teachers may not find, within standards regimes, all that they need to guide and drive them professionally.

#### **1.4. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research is to explore classroom teachers' perceptions of the meaning, purpose and impact of teacher professional standards and where professional standards find their place in teaching.

#### **1.5. THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

The often stated intention of professional standards for teachers is that they will contribute to raising teacher quality (ACE, 2003; AIS (NSW), CEC (NSW), NSW Government, 2013; AITSL, 2014a; 2015e; Dow & Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, 2003; MCEETYA Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce, 2003; Productivity Commission, 2012; Ramsey, 2000). Putting this claim to the test, in the case of the AITSL Standards, may be achieved by asking the following main research question:

What is the impact of professional standards on the teaching profession?

Secondary research questions follow as corollaries of this main question. In order to understand the impact of professional standards on classroom teachers-as-professionals, we must be able to describe the conceptions that teachers have about professional standards and related concepts, as these conceptions ultimately determine teachers' actions and reactions to

professional standards. Secondly, the question of how teachers negotiate the multiple discourses operating in professional standards offers insights that will aid in answering the main research question. Thirdly, the notion of ‘being’ a ‘professional’ is so central to the concept of professional standards—and the claims that are made for them in the name of teacher professionalism—that answering the main research question requires that ‘being’ and ‘professional’ be explored as particular concepts in need of elucidation. These considerations suggest three research sub-questions:

1. What are the conceptions of the AITSL Standards held by teachers?
2. How do teachers negotiate the contesting discourses operating within professional standards?
3. How do professional standards impact on the professional that teachers become?

Having provided the various contexts, global, national, and local for this study, our attention now turns to a consideration of the literature that informs this study and which forms, influences and critiques the discourses to which teachers respond daily. Understanding these discourses is another layer of appreciation of the context in which teachers experience professional standards.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The context for this study as presented in Section 1.1 (p. 1) has mirrored the quality teacher agenda in presenting the world in terms of a binary—quality improvement versus quality assurance. This mirroring presents the normative view of the world out of which the AITSL Standards have been constructed and which this thesis seeks to problematise and critique. At the outset, this literature review acknowledges the limitation of this binary construction and recognises the power of binary thinking to position one side of the binary as normative and the other side as deviant. Critical analysis of binaries is necessary such that their binding limitations on thinking can be overcome and richer, more complex ways of understanding can be developed (Singh, 2011). Having offered this acknowledgement, it is reasonable to propose that this literature review also be presented according to the dominant binary constructs of quality assurance and quality improvement.

This literature review will proceed by first considering the gap in the literature on teachers' perceptions of professional standards. It will then offer a rationale for the adoption of a conceptual rather than a critical literature review approach. Before considering the literature itself, the opening remarks will conclude by offering an outline of the structure of the review.

### 2.1. LITERATURE ON TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Hattie (2011) relates the story of his early work on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the US. His first task there was to gather all the professional standards for teachers documents that existed in the US across all jurisdictions. He ended up with a room full of boxes. The point of the story is that there is no shortage of professional standards or, indeed, writing about professional standards and claims for the difference that they will make to teachers and teaching. There are, on the other hand, limited studies on teachers' experience of subject-specific teaching standards but still no notable international literature on practitioners' experience of professionalism let alone professional standards (Swann, McIntyre, Pell, Hargreaves, & Cunningham, 2010). Given the newness of the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Standards, there is a scarcity of critical

literature as it relates to experienced teachers' perceptions of those standards. Even with professional standards for teachers operating since 2004 in New South Wales (NSW) schools, there is a dearth of literature about teachers' experience of them. The two exceptions are Bourke's (2011) doctoral thesis, which was referenced in Section 1.1 (p. 1); and Mowbray's (2005) doctoral work, a comparative analysis of teachers' perceptions of professional teaching standards utilising mixed methods. Mowbray's positionality (as Executive Officer, Teacher Education Review, for the NSW Department of Education), with evident responsibility for carriage of matters around the area of standards (NSWSPC, c. 2000), suggests that his thesis was advocacy work rather than critical work.

Raewyn Connell (personal communication, 6 July, 2012) offers the view that the gap in the research is because the literature on policy and policy mechanisms is generally separate from the literature on teachers and classrooms. An extensive Scottish review of literature on teacher professional learning confirms that studies of the impact of accreditation measured against professional standards are virtually non-existent (Menter, et al., 2010).

Despite this lack of scholarly attention, understanding and critiquing teachers' experience of professional standards warrants merit if for no other reason than that teachers are the agents whom the AITSL Standards are intended to directly influence. The current research directs its attention to this gap in the literature.

## **2.2. RATIONALE FOR A CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this section is to offer a conceptual review of the literature around themes that touch on teachers' experience of professional standards. A conceptual review is to be distinguished from a more traditional critical literature review which would critique the warrantability of various claims made in literature relevant to the research topic (Jesson, Matheson, & Lacey, 2011). A conceptual review organises the literature into the various concepts that contribute to the construction, or influence the dominance or otherwise, of various discourses in the broader topic under review—in this instance, teachers' experience of

professional standards. A conceptual review is most appropriate to this study for several reasons. Firstly, the study adopts a critical positionality in relation to professional standards and thus accepts the methodological premises of the critical theoretical work on professionalism and standards that forms the critical literature part of the review. Secondly, the intention of the study is to identify and explore the ways in which teachers perceive, negotiate and enact professional standards and the task of the researcher is to reflexively interpret these findings against the multiplicity of discourses that teachers are exposed to daily in their work. This applies equally to apparently positive and affirming discourses such as those associated with notions of capacity building, teacher professional judgement and teacher professional learning as it does to more seemingly sinister discourses such as those associated with the various regimes of accountability within a neoliberal ecology of education. This conceptual review of the literature makes apparent the various contemporary themes to which teachers both appeal and resist as they negotiate their relationship to professional standards in their work. A synthesis rather than critique of the dominant contemporary understanding of particular concepts with which teachers are regularly challenged, inspired, brought to account and frustrated is thus most important in the context of this study, as this is what teachers are presented with in a more or less articulated way by their policymakers and their policy implementers. For these reasons, a conceptual literature review is most useful to the research problem and purpose of this study.

### **2.3. STRUCTURE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

Founded on an initial review of the critical literature on the neoliberal ecology within which professional standards have emerged in the global metropole, the review will elucidate the major themes which emerge from the extensive international literature on teacher professional standards and teacher professional learning. The former is important because it will identify the tensions and challenges that teachers potentially face in encountering professional standards. The latter is important because of the link between standards and professional learning. In the view of Parr (2010), “overwhelmingly, discussion about professional learning at the policy level... has been mediated by the rhetoric of standards... and of teaching quality”

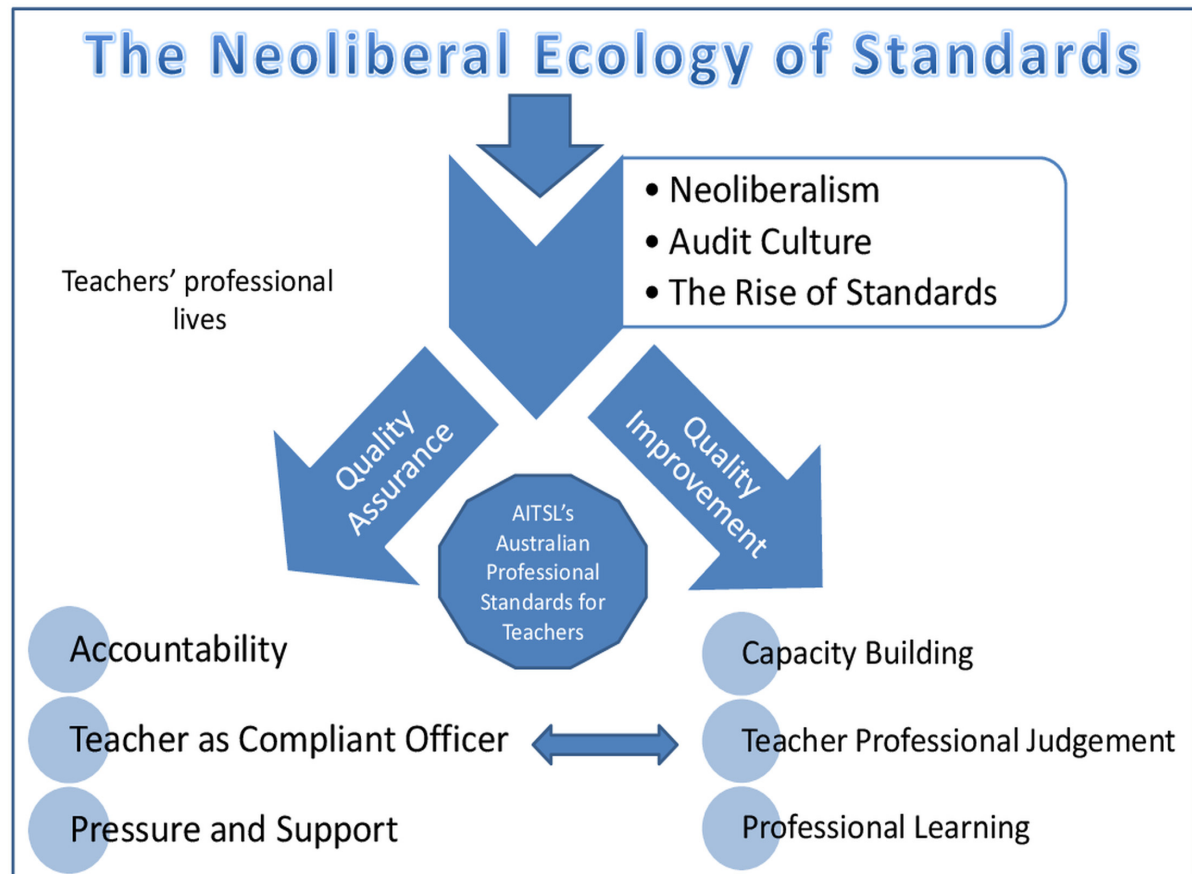
(p. 149). The link between the discourse on professional standards and the discourse on professional learning is also clear in the AITSL's (2012b) *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework*, released a short time after AITSL published the AITSL Standards. Together, a review of the literature in these two areas will direct this study towards the kinds of questions which might be asked of the lives of teachers that will contribute to new knowledge about the nexus between professional standards and teachers' work.

The teacher quality agenda has a high profile in Australian public debate (Dinham, 2012b; Jensen, 2010) and the claim is frequently made for a link between teacher quality and improvement in student outcomes (Bruniges, et al., 2013; Hattie, 2015b; Ingvarson, 2010a). It is argued here that the teacher quality agenda should be framed within the neoliberal ecology of standards. An appreciation of the various elements of this ecology is important, as it is the frame of reference within which this study will reflexively interpret teachers' conceptions of professional standards. The major discourses of quality assurance and quality improvement which help to frame this literature review are distinct from, although not entirely separate from, the multiplicity of discourses which emerge out of this study's exploration of teachers' work. They are, nonetheless, an important *starting point and guide* for the analysis and reflexive interpretation of research findings regarding teachers' encounter with the AITSL Standards explored in this study. Accordingly, in part the review is organised around the two discourse headings of quality assurance and quality improvement. The discourse of quality assurance, informed by neoliberal proclivities where the role of the teacher is constructed as a compliant technical officer of the state, is closely tied to regimes of accountability and the concept of an audit culture and these notions are explored in the literature review. An alternative discourse of quality improvement is concerned with issues of capacity building, with its concomitant sub-themes of moral purpose, risk and trust, and collaborative inquiry.

Professional standards beg the question of the nature of professionalism itself, which will thus be considered as the final major theme of the review. How these themes and sub-themes mesh together conceptually is illustrated in Figure 2.1. Throughout the literature review, the



significance of the emergent themes for the research questions of this study will be considered.



*Figure 2.1: Conceptual map of the Literature Review.*

## 2.4. THE NEOLIBERAL ECOLOGY OF STANDARDS

This section will consider the ecology in which the standards movement has emerged over the last several decades. It will situate the emergence of professional teaching standards within the framework of a pervasive neoliberalism that dominates the global metropole, an approach to modern life that has spawned an audit culture which uses standards as a key tool within its regimes of accountability. This section, following Codd (1988), generally contends that policy documents “are ideological texts” (p. 244) and that understanding the neoliberal ecology in which professional standards around the world have proliferated is essential to an understanding of the standards themselves.

Neoliberalism emerged in the US and the UK in the last quarter of the 20th century and is today a global political and cultural movement that places unwavering trust in the power of the market, promoted through state policies (Olssen, 2016), to create the equilibrium that societies need to progress (Connell, 2010; Foucault, 2008; D. Harvey, 2005). It emphasises market competencies and a style of managerial accountability that has given rise to an audit culture (Taubman, 2009). Without significant critique and without deliberate choice, we have happened upon a world, in the global metropole at least, where ‘marketisation’ reaches into all spheres, including education (Ball, 2012; D. Harvey, 2005; Sahlberg, 2010b; Sandel, 2012). The ubiquity of neoliberal ideology in the Australian context has been successfully argued by Pusey (1992; 2010) and its thorough dominance in all levels of education is well documented (Connell, 2013a; 2013b; Gibbon & Henriksen, 2012; Gorur, 2013; Harrison, et al., 2013; Lingard, 2010; 2011a; Schostak, 2014). While Rudd (2009) argues that the global financial crisis, which required massive state intervention in world economies, spelled the demise of neoliberalism, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) take a different view, arguing that a neoliberal worldview continues to penetrate deep into social policy areas, not least of all into education, even after a period where it was believed that the global financial crisis may have influenced policy direction (Lingard, 2011b). A “neoliberal imaginary” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 37) is perceived to be “ruthless with spin and manipulation,” distorting and obfuscating truth (Connell, 2007, p. 230). Researchers also argue that neoliberalism has penetrated into the imaginary of the political left (Clarke, 2012b; Lingard, 2010; Walter, 2010; Wiborg, 2012; Wrigley, 2012). It hegemonically finds its way into educational discourses, threatening to silence debate as if there was no alternative view of the world available (Ditchburn, 2012; Roberts, 2010; Wrigley, 2012).

Some of the phenomena of neoliberalism that are recognisable in education are outsourcing; accountability regimes; efficiency drives based on an argument of scarcity of resources; emphasis on lifelong learning; reductionism; privileging of qualitative ‘evidence’; and an individualism that inheres the teacher quality discourse. Neoliberal education policy is evident in the inclination of governments to outsource public education to entities such as charter

schools in the US (Hill & Lake, 2001), academies in the UK (Tomlinson, 2005), self-managing schools in New Zealand (Patrick, 2007), and independent government schools in Western Australia (Gobby, 2013). The neoliberal paradigm follows a recognisable pattern of loosening direct control and replacing it with onerous audit and accountability mechanisms that bind institutions to the policy intentions of government (Gibbon & Henriksen, 2012; Schostak, 2014). An aspect of neoliberal discourse is constant reference to the scarcity of resources and the need to introduce efficiencies. Davies (2003) argues that resources are indeed scarce precisely because the audit society invests so many resources in surveillance. Lifelong learning is strongly emphasised in neoliberal policy discourses, which construct the learner as a unit of production in the knowledge economy, a unit which must retrain frequently to maintain the requisite agility to move into different work as the needs of the economy change (Beckett, 2011; Biesta, 2008). Neoliberalism eschews complexity, seeking simple, reductive answers and solutions to problems (Gale, 2006; Stanley & Stronach, 2012). An example of oversimplification is the proliferation of ‘what works’ research (Auld & Morris, 2014; Mockler, 2005; Simons, 2015; Whitty, 2012) and “evidence-based practice” (Webster-Wright, 2010, p. 39), de-emphasising the contextual complexity of teaching (Beijaard, Meijer, Morine-Dersheimer, & Tillema, 2005). Contemporary research approaches in education reflect neoliberal sensibilities, where randomised controlled trials are considered to be the research ‘gold standard’ and are privileged in the evidence-base, even in arenas where qualitative research may be more instructive (Delandshere, 2006; Smyth, Down, McInerney, & Hattam, 2014). International metrics like PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS have become the basis for measuring a competency-based approach to professionalism which stands as a synonym for teacher quality (Zierer, 2015, p. 783). Finally, individualism is evident within the teacher quality discourse. The capacity of the individual teacher to make an heroic difference to the life of students is emphasised (Hattie, 2015b), while the unequal distribution of education resources and support that exacerbates disadvantage and which can be shown to have a significant impact on educational outcomes is downplayed or even ignored (Boston, 2014). As will be seen in Section 2.5.1 (p. 43), a neoliberal ecology pervades contemporary educational settings. Teacher professional standards can be understood as one

element of this prevailing neoliberal audit culture.

Technical rationality is a taken-for-granted term that is of particular relevance to the present study and connects to the direction in which neoliberalism has taken education (Gibbon & Henriksen, 2012; Tuinamuana, 2011). Members of the Frankfurt School used the term to describe the application of principles of seamless reproduction, expediency and refinement; in two words, “standardized efficiency” (Marcuse, 1941, p. 417). Technical rationality was first applied, appropriately, to industrial production, and thereafter applied, inappropriately, to human relations such that it has “standardized the world” (Marcuse, 1941, p. 419). In a prescient critique of the application of technical rationality to human relations by the National Socialists, the Frankfurt school writers warn of how the shortcutting, absolutist, compliance solutions of technical rationality is “bound to shatter” the “rights and privileges granted the individual in his own right” (Kirchheimer, 1941, pp. 473–474). The Frankfurt school also highlighted the discounting of ethics that took place under the influence of technical rationality (Giroux, 2001). In more recent decades and in specific reference to the life of professionals, Schön (2005) claims that technical rationality is the mental frame which has most heavily influenced the development of the professions. He takes technical rationality here to mean “instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique” (Schön, 2005, p. 21). From outside the educational field, Lanier (2010), offers scything insights into why technical rationality matters. Technical rationality denies the messy complexity of human problems and demands that phenomena be understood in simplistic, readily definable, repeatable and measurable ways; but, he asks, “can you tell how far you’ve let your sense of personhood degrade in order to make the illusion work for you” (Lanier, 2010, p. 32)? It is concern for this *diminishing* nature of technical rationality, a key strategy of neoliberalism which in turn gives birth to technologies such as professional standards, which makes a consideration of technical rationality important for the current examination of teachers’ experience of professional standards.

There is much that can be said about the influence of neoliberalism on school education; but while there is a large body of literature on neoliberal policy setting, much of it focuses on

describing the discourse rather than “studying the effects and resistances that constitute ideology in practice” (Whitty, 2002, p. 74). The current research opens up this latter channel of research to which Whitty refers. In examining teacher professional standards via the case study object of the AITSL Standards (Section 3.2.1, p. 72), this study especially considers the silences, omissions, resistances, and enactment manoeuvres of teachers, as reflected in their discursive practices and their conceptions relating to professional standards.

## **2.5. THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH QUALITY ASSURANCE**

This section will consider three themes associated with quality assurance, namely, audit culture, accountability and standards; the concept of the teacher viewed as a compliant officer of government or an associated agency; and pressure and support. Each of these themes is prominent in the literature on teacher quality.

### **2.5.1. Audit culture, accountability and standards**

The 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of an audit culture and the standards movement which serves as one of its key technologies (Power, 1997). Standards serve the accountability agenda of governments as they can and do operate as instruments of control. The process of standardisation challenges the “organizational power and discretion of relatively autonomous groups” (Power, 1997, p. 97), allowing for the colonisation of organisational priorities and values by the auditor (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). As governments withdraw from direct involvement in education and turn more to governance—“steering not rowing” (Gamble, 2009, p. 83)—they seek to put in place more prescriptive standards in order to ensure the quality that they are no longer close enough to actualise first hand. Gibbon and Henriksen (2012) call this at-arms-distance governance “governing through standards” (p. 275). Schwier (2012), writing from Canada, notes that universities “are in a state of almost constant review, both internally and externally” (p. 100). Shah, Nair and Wilson (2011) report a similar situation in Australian higher education. Similar high performativity climates have also long been noted in schools in Australia and internationally (Ball, 2003; Lingard, 2011b). In schools, the focus has moved from the quality of the subject of interest (teachers), to the

quality of the tool used to audit them (professional standards). The evidence for this is simply that national-level professional standards for teachers exist where they did not exist before. This has been a recipe for decontextualised ‘reified’ standards that are removed from the authentic experiences of teachers (Parr, 2010). Along these lines, Thrupp (2006) suggests that generic standards, which have overshadowed the professional association developed, subject-specific standards that preceded them, are preferred by authorities because they are more technically and politically expedient.

### **2.5.2. Teacher as compliant officer**

The concept of teacher as compliant officer is broadly discussed in the literature. The US literature suggests that professional standards can position teachers as merely “implementers of content” (Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004, p. 7), with “active intellectual engagement” of teachers being “undermined and atomized by the requirement or pressure to implement uniform standards” (Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004, p. 12). The UK literature casts the teacher in the mould of “recipe-following operative” (Gewirtz, Mahony, Hextall, & Cribb, 2009, p. 7), subject to a strict regime of performativity (Ball, 2003); a competent, multi-skilled labourer (Jones, 2009, p. 56) or a technician (Tomlinson, 2005); the latter term is also used in the Australian context (Sachs, 2011b) where the shift to a “‘competent teacher’ model” is also identified (Connell, 2009, p. 217). Generally and globally, “there has been an increased focus on treating teachers as technicians or educational clerks rather than as reflective professionals (Somekh & Zeichner, 2009, p. 15), which does an “ethical violence” to the practitioner (Butler, 2005, p. 42, cited in Stanley & Stronach, 2012, p. 299). The managerial framework within which education is now operating encourages the conceptualisation of teachers as officers of the state who, through their training and ongoing professional learning, can be shaped into compliant officers implementing a standardised curriculum in a standardised way (Ball, 2003; Ferguson, White, Hay, Dixon, & Moss, 2004; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Sachs, 2011a).

In the preoccupation of standards with technical skills (Sachs, 2011a), what teachers think and what attitudes and moral purpose they hold are consequently subverted (Day & Smethem,

2009; Evans, 2011; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). The ontological dimension of teacher professionalism—the person a teacher *becomes* in the course of committing to their profession—is completely ignored. As the AITSL Standards are concerned with teachers' professional practice, it should follow that research around professional practice has an abiding concern with ontology. The reality is, however, that ontological questions have largely been neglected in the literature (Dall'Alba, 2009b).

### **2.5.3. Pressure and support**

This section will consider the rhetoric of pressure and support that has specifically been applied within the field of education to act upon the professionalism of teachers. Michael Barber, one of the key architects of educational reform during the Blair government, is unequivocal about the importance of high pressure and high support (Barber & Phillips, 2000; Barber, 2010), a term which seems to have its origins in a 1994 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report relating the correlation between high pressure and support and teacher quality (cited in Riley, Docking, & Rowles, 1999). His influence is significant, evidenced in the use of the term in Department of Education documents of the time (DfEE, 1997). Among the several elements of high pressure identified is accountability, which is equated with determining whether value for money has been received on education, that value in turn being determined by student results on standardised tests.

High support is also seen as critical to success, as without it conflict and demoralisation is certain. Central to high support is a commitment to ongoing teacher professional learning to build teacher capacity. Barber and Phillips (2000) summarise their approach as “gentle pressure relentlessly applied and serious support intentionally delivered” (p. 280). Pressure and support is a notion which has strong support among many educational camps and the term is in use in NSW in the context of professional learning (Beveridge, Groundwater-Smith, Kemmis, & Wasson, 2005; Turkington, 2004). Fullan (2005; 2009b; 2011b) proposes that pressure and support are most usefully to be understood in terms of accountability and capacity building. He argues that most approaches to the development of quality in schools

are heavy on the accountability side and weak on the capacity building side. Accountability is essential, but relentlessly applied on its own it is disintegrating, judgemental, and will result in a low-trust regime. Capacity building, on the other hand, proffers a rhetoric that focuses on the professional development of the key resource of schools—its teachers.

## **2.6. THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

This section will consider three themes associated with quality improvement, namely capacity building, teacher professional judgement and professional learning. Each of these themes is prominent in the literature on teacher quality, but unlike the previous three themes, they are more on the side of support than pressure.

### **2.6.1. Capacity building**

The concept of building the internal capacity of organisations so that they become more self-reliant is not new. Self-reliance suggests not change imposed from without, but change realised and actualised from within the human capital of a school. Its prominence in the educational literature arose out of the application of the term in international development (Dinham & Crowther, 2011). In Fullan's (2005) reading of the recent history of global educational reform, greater accountability has led to the realisation that capacity building is essential and that "lateral capacity building across peers was a powerful learning strategy" (p. 17). Capacity building is a concept that is now axiomatic in the educational literature (Crowther, 2011). Indeed, much of the literature in the field speaks about capacity building without attempting to reference or define it. The term is broadly used to refer to any strategy that seeks to develop the physical, intellectual and social capital and shared moral purpose of a school through investment in collaborative networks built on relational trust (Levin & Fullan, 2009). In high performing systems, capacity building can drive reform in a way that focusing on externally imposed accountability cannot (Fullan, 2006; 2011b; Fullan, Rincón-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Drawing on the work of Andrews and Crowther (2006) and Crowther (2010; 2011), capacity building might be weighed against traditional notions of professionalism as illustrated in Table 2.1. The similarities are strong,



suggesting that capacity building is contemporary educational language that largely aligns with traditional notions of professionalism.

Capacity building does not escape the ecology of neoliberalism. It constructs teachers as organisational units, whose capacity needs to be multiplied. It is a discourse which “implies that people are containers for knowledge” (Webster-Wright, 2006, p. 25). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), in their description of professional capital, emphasise the importance of the collective dimension of capacity building, but they are also pushing back against the “wrong drivers” of neoliberal discourse and policymaking (p. 41). Capacity building *has* the potential to contribute positively to the discourse of quality improvement if it is conceived ontologically and as contributive to professional growth (Dall’Alba, 2005; Webster-Wright, 2006). The concept of capacity building is apposite to the discourse of quality improvement embedded in the AITSL Standards. Several sub-themes noted in Table 2.1 are relevant to this study, namely moral purpose, risk and trust, and collaborative inquiry.

*Table 2.1: Capacity Building v Traditional Notions of Professionalism*

<b>Capacity building</b>	<b>Traditional notions of professionalism</b>
Mutual trust	Broad trust relationships (teacher—teacher; teacher—principal; teacher—student; teacher—parent)
Shared purpose	Shared moral purpose
Individual expression	Autonomy; judgement
Commitment to sustained school success	Responsibility
Professional learning as a shared collegial process	Professional learning organised under the auspices of the profession itself

#### **2.6.1.1. Moral purpose**

There is evidence that a sense of moral purpose has a positive impact on educational

outcomes (Day, 2004; Fullan, 1993; Sahlberg, 2010b). The moral purpose of education helps to bring clearer focus to the notion of *internal accountability* as analogous to the *professional responsibility* every teacher bears to improve the life prospects of every child under his or her care (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; McLeod, 2015). Education understood this way frames responsibility as a “relational disposition” (McLeod, 2015, p. 4). Moral purpose also speaks to the ontological dimension of teaching. The importance of moral purpose in teaching is threatened by a neoliberal ecology of education which places value on education as “a form of capital, exchanged in the marketplace largely for personal benefit” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 86). This threat is often seen through the commodification of the learner as a unit of production in the knowledge economy (Ball, 2012; Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2012), relegating education’s capacity to develop socially just citizens (Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004; Lingard, 2011b; Wrigley, 2012). The research question and sub-questions of this study allow the opportunity to explore the degree to which moral purpose is present or absent in the AITSL Standards, and whether it is perceived by or even important to teachers and their sense of their own professionalism. The research questions do this by asking the degree to which the AITSL Standards portrait of the exemplary teacher matches the portrait of the exemplary teacher held by the research participants.

#### **2.6.1.2. Risk and trust**

A neoliberal culture which reduces professionalism to a list of competencies undermines professional judgement and creates a risk-averse culture that avoids taking responsibility for anything (B. Davies, 2003; Power, 2004). The literature makes frequent reference to this risk-averse culture operating within education (Caldwell, 2011; Dinham, 2008b; Hoyle & Wallace, 2009; Loader, McGraw, & Mason, 2007; Sachs, 2011a). Rather than being averse to risk, high performing learning organisations encourage risk-taking that allows for new insights, initiatives and ways of doing things which can break free of unproductive paradigms (Hargreaves & Harris, 2011; Zammit, et al., 2007). It is also widely acknowledged that attempts at capacity building and school improvement are bound to fail where a culture of high relational trust has not been established (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Crowther, 2011; Earl

& Timperley, 2008; D. H. Hargreaves, 2001; Kilgore & Reynolds, 2011; Leana, 2011; Levin, 2010; Mockler & Sachs, 2011; Needham, 2011; Sahlberg, 2010b; 2011; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Webster-Wright, 2010). Sachs (2003a) identifies trust as a critical dimension of a professionalism that is outward looking, engaging with stakeholders outside the profession in strategic and purposive ways. These insights are relevant to this study in that they suggest the conditions necessary for professional standards to have any significant impact on the professional lives of teachers.

#### 2.6.1.3. *Collaborative inquiry*

There are a number of terms used to describe the work of teachers and teacher educators, in schools, to investigate, understand and improve the quality of teaching (Sachs, 2003a). Here, the term collaborative inquiry is used to refer to this work, which is taken to be a form of continuous professional development (CPD).

Central to the standards movement is the focus on the work of *individuals*. Professional standards for teachers scripts around the world describe what an individual teacher should know and be able to do. Mention is made of collaboration but it is hardly central. Wolf and Taylor's (2008) study of the effects on teachers' perspectives and practices following National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification notes the importance of collaboration but that it was not a required part of the certification process. Similarly, the AITSL Standards (BOSTES, 2015a) mention collaboration three times in relation to the voluntary 'Lead' career stage; the only other mention of collaboration occurs in the mandated 'Proficient' standard on relationships with parents, not fellow teachers. In something of a corrective to this, the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards New South Wales (BOSTES) (2015a) edition of the AITSL Standards emphasises the importance of collaboration with colleagues three times in its introductory remarks to the standards, but these remarks do not form part of the actual AITSL Standards.

In contradistinction to this, critical collaborative inquiry that is grounded in practice at the local level is being strongly advocated by the research community (Bangs & MacBeath, 2012;

Gilbert, 2011). Taubman (2009), for example, notes that “the focus on the individual teacher as responsible for student success also promotes a fantasy of teacher as hero” (p. 85). The counter-cultural position of teacher collaboration challenges the orthodoxy of individualism and the limits imposed by audit and risk aversion cultures. By definition, being counter-cultural implies speaking out and challenging existing norms. It is difficult to do this alone, but possible within the strength of an activist profession as proposed by Sachs (2000; 2011a). More will be said about active professionalism in Section 6.10.3 (p. 202).

The requirement for a culture of inquiry as a feature of quality professional learning was one of the conclusions of the Australian National Mapping of Teacher Professional Learning Project (Doecke, et al., 2008). A major report commissioned by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) (Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005), documenting a series of case studies and researching the link between teacher professional development and student outcomes, found that the link was complex, not always direct and difficult to assess due to the need for difficult-to-obtain longitudinal data. Nonetheless, where impacts were measured, the presence of teacher collaborative inquiry was one of the key features of successful teacher professional development. These findings offer two key insights for this study. Firstly, they suggest the need to explore teachers’ experiences of working with their colleagues in negotiating the demands of externally imposed accountability and professional standards. Secondly, they suggest the importance of seeking to understand the ways in which teachers’ experience of professional standards contribute to the evolution of collaborative networks within their work lives. Both of these inquiries are possible within the context of this study and helped to shape Question 5 of the *Interview Guide* (Appendix J).

### **2.6.2. Teacher professional judgement**

A responsive accountability does not imagine the teacher as compliant officer, but rather as an autonomous ‘principal’ who uses knowledge, skill, intellect and workplace-honed wisdom to make fine-grained judgements on the infinite variety of human needs that are presented to them daily in the course of their work with young people, their peers, parents and the wider

community (Gale & Densmore, 2003). Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) advocate strongly for the primacy of teacher professional judgement. In the current neoliberal, audit-conscious culture, however, the judgement of professionals is under pressure, being seen as insular, self-serving or avoiding scrutiny (Dall'Alba, 2009b; Gale & Densmore, 2003; NCC, 2000; Webster-Wright, 2010). An audit culture replaces professional judgement with standards and compliance formulations (Parr, 2010). Precisely because the centrality of teacher professional judgement is not seen to be normative in the current neoliberal ecology of education, convincing those outside the teaching profession of the importance of teacher professional judgement will require a case being made in the public domain.

Central to the contention of the primacy of teacher professional judgement is the conviction that teachers hold values and ideals which influence them in their work. These values and beliefs are the *why* of teachers' actions (Biesta, 2009; Maguire, 2014). The *why* of teachers' actions sustains changes in practice upon which school improvement depends. The ontological *why* of teachers' actions is inextricably linked to teaching as a moral endeavour (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Ponte & Ax, 2011), a consideration outside the domain of the market and standards mindset. The primacy of teacher professional judgement strongly promotes the need for it to be considered as an element of the response to the research question: What is the impact of professional standards on the teaching profession?

### **2.6.3. Professional learning**

Before proceeding with a discussion of the literature on professional learning, it is necessary to clarify the distinction between the terms 'professional development' and 'professional learning'. The NSW Institute of Teachers sought to distinguish between the terms in its *Continuing Professional Development Policy* (NSWIT, 2011). In a research of the literature for AITSL, Mayer & Lloyd (2011) claim that while the two terms are often used interchangeably by teachers, the academic literature encourages a distinction between the two. This is overstating the reality. OECD Reports prefer the use of the term 'professional development' (OECD, 2009; 2011). In a later background paper commissioned by the same

organisation, Timperley (2011) acknowledges Mayer and Lloyd's point regarding the distinction, but then proceeds to define the terms for essentially interchangeable use. This is consistent with her earlier work in the field, where the terms are also used interchangeably (Timperley, 2006; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). Groundwater-Smith & Mockler (2009) contradict Mayer and Lloyd, viewing the terms as "largely used interchangeably in the current age" (p. 56). Having said that, they argue for a larger focus on professional learning as the ongoing career-long process of teachers honing their expertise. 'Professional learning' captures this idea better than 'professional development'. The latter is a term that assumes deficit and is pregnant with connection to one-off inservice workshops which, in isolation, are seen to do little to advance teachers' mind frames (Senge, et al., 2000; Timperley, et al., 2007; Doecke, et al., 2008; Fullan, 2008; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; OECD, 2009; Gilbert, 2011). It is also a term associated with top-down imposition of solutions (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992) and which connotes things 'done to' teachers rather than 'done by' teachers (Clark, 1992; Doecke, et al., 2008; Long, 2012; Mayer & Lloyd, 2011; Parr, 2010; Sachs, 2011b). The term CPD is frequently used in the literature (Coates, et al., 2011a; Day & Sachs, 2004; Day & Leitch, 2007; Doecke, et al., 2008; EPPI-Centre, c. 2007; Livingston, 2012; Menter, et al., 2010; Sachs, 2011b; Walker, et al., 2011) and was preferred by the NSW Institute of Teachers (BOSTES, 2015). It is also in wide use within UK education systems, frequent wellsprings of developments in Australian education. Watson and Michael (2015) note the sloppy and slippery interchanging application of 'continuing' and 'continuous' in the use of the term CPD in Scotland, where an attempt to appropriate the term CPD is underway, to transform it to career-long professional learning to serve the agenda of government mandated professional updating (Watson & Michael, 2015). The phrase 'ongoing professional development' is also encountered (Darling-Hammond, 1997; OECD, 2005), as are 'continuing education' and 'lifelong learning' (Doecke, et al., 2008; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The addition of the word 'continuing' or 'ongoing' to 'professional development' connotes a notion similar to what is intended by the term 'professional learning'. The terms professional learning (PL) and CPD will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

Professional learning is essential for school system improvement and becomes more important the better a system gets. The McKinsey Report (Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010) on the world's most improved school systems indicates how, as systems move through the continuum from poor to fair to good to great to excellent, the interventions move from a 50/50 accountability and professional learning balance to a heavy reliance on professional learning to drive improvement.

The importance of teacher professional learning for student outcomes was recognised more than a decade ago (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1999). This is in accord with a review of the literature on teacher education, conducted by University of Glasgow scholars on behalf of the Scottish government. The Scottish review concluded that “although there is little hard evidence to demonstrate the connections between teaching quality, teacher education and pupil outcomes, there is widespread professional agreement that they are positively related” (Menter, et al., 2010, p. 45). A consensus is evident in the literature that professional development (PD) is most effective when it is “continuing, active, social, and related to practice” (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 703) and also when it is practically-oriented and school-based (Menter, et al., 2010; Theissen, 1992). Similarly, Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis (2005) found that the impact of teacher professional learning on student outcomes is real but indirect. The effectiveness of professional learning is threatened, however, when it is commodified by systems that require professionals to accrue points or hours for accreditation or registration (Webster-Wright, 2010). Despite the consensus view, there are voices in the research community who query the degree of influence of teacher professional learning on student outcomes and the unrealistic pressure that the focus places on teachers (Taubman, 2009).

Evidence of positive impacts on student learning from teachers' collaborative professional learning has emerged from the best evidence synthesis work of the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) in London (EPPI-Centre, c. 2007). Another New Zealand best evidence synthesis (Timperley, et al., 2007) concluded that the impact of teacher professional learning was most effective when it occurred over an

extended period, allowing it to become culturally embedded not just for the individual teacher, but for the professional learning community within which he or she was immersed, a view supported by Hattie (2015b) and Hargreaves and Fullan (2012).

In Australian work, Aspland and Macpherson (2012) perceive “an inextricable link” between the AITSL Standards and “professional education” (Aspland & Macpherson, 2012, p. 105). AITSL (2012c) claims that student success is contingent on teachers’ commitment to their own professional learning, but this is nothing more than an assertion. More definitive is the understanding that teachers value professional learning that supports them in determining the kind of teacher they seek to become (A. Davies, 2005). McMillan, McConnell and O’Sullivan’s (2016) work with Irish teachers’ attitudes to CPD also supports this view. The perspective of the Australian government’s Productivity Commission (2012) in their research report into the schools workforce is that the link between teacher professional learning and student outcomes is moot. Parr (2010) is equally moot on the point, questioning the privileging of quantitative studies in the meta-analyses and the narrowness of their focus on outcomes that can be easily measured. Parr questions the value of professional learning that is tied to standards-based educational reforms. He proposes instead a “dialogic professional learning” (Parr, 2010, p. 73) that relies fully on teachers reflecting on their own learning in ongoing critical dialogue with their colleagues, without which they will become captives of a system not of their own making and not in the interests of their students. The works of Dall’Alba (2009b) and Webster-Wright (2010), drawing on Schön’s (2005) seminal work on the reflective practitioner, are perhaps most apposite to the present study, arguing that current practices fail to account for the ontological dimension of professional learning. Webster-Wright notes that “learning is viewed in epistemological terms as change in professional practice knowledge, with the professional viewed as deficient and in need of developing” (Webster-Wright, 2006, p. vii). In the conclusion to her study on contemporary professional education, Dall’Alba notes the missing ontological dimension of most programmes of professional education:

There is a need to reconfigure professional education as a process of becoming, whose key purpose is developing professional ways of



being, rather than simply knowledge and skills... If professional education programmes are to enhance processes of becoming, the interrelation of epistemology and ontology is to be nurtured and sustained... Professional education must open and interrogate possibilities for being professionals within, and despite, existing constraints. It must enhance learning among aspiring professionals in ways that free them in, and for, becoming. (Dall'Alba, 2009b, p. 144)

#### **2.6.3.1. *The use of professional standards as a framework for teacher professional learning***

Professional standards such as the AITSL Standards are accompanied by regulatory regimes which require teachers to engage in CPD. Professional standards such as the AITSL Standards also assume the contested point that teacher learning is linear and staged, rather than sporadic and responsive to the new contexts, opportunities and needs that teachers face in the course of their careers (Aspland & Macpherson, 2012; Webster-Wright, 2010). This point notwithstanding, the binding of professional standards to professional learning is based on some researchers' convictions that professional standards can guide and promote teacher learning and ultimately improve teacher quality (Ingvarson, et al., 2005; Meiers, 2007). This link is taken as a common sense given in policy discourse on teacher professional standards (Kriewaldt, 2008).

AITSL's *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (2012b) articulates the intended nexus between the AITSL Standards and teacher professional learning and sets out AITSL's intention to develop professional learning modules to address aspects of the standards. The AITSL direction was foreshadowed by the policy direction in Victoria, where a government report into effective strategies for teacher professional learning explicitly recommended the linking of standards to flexibly delivered professional learning (Howard, 2009). The inference which might be drawn from this nexus is that if it is not articulated in the AITSL Standards, it is not important for teacher learning.

The *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* does not seem to have a clear place for developing teacher attitudes, mind frames, values and beliefs. It would be

untrue to say that all professional standards documents are devoid of values and beliefs, but they are implicit rather than explicit. Hattie (2012) confirms that it is teachers' beliefs and commitments that make the difference. Each of the 'mind frames' that he elucidates as fundamental to expert teaching are concerned with teachers' and teacher leaders' *beliefs and commitments*, not what they *know and can do*. While what teachers know and can do is important, it is not what will make the biggest difference. This reiterates a point on moral purpose made in Section 2.6.1.1 (p. 47).

The way in which professional standards are utilised by teachers is central to their success or otherwise (Kriewaldt, 2008; Mayer, Mitchell, Macdonald, & Bell, 2005). Teachers' counter-cultural approach to and responsibility for their own professional learning is critical, for without it they become complicit in a risk averse culture that can never serve quality improvement (Bloomfield, 2006; Caldwell, 2011; Loader, et al., 2007; MacBeath, 2009; Sachs, 2011a; Sahlberg, 2010a).

## **2.7. PROFESSIONALISM**

Traditional notions of professionalism understand it to be hallmarked by specialised knowledge, autonomy and responsibility (Furlong, 2011). The concomitant of these characteristics is relational trust both with clients and within the membership of the profession (Gewirtz, et al., 2009). There is, however, a large body of literature contesting different notions of professionalism. Even within the different streams, though, there is little consensus; the literature is a melange of refinements and contentions regarding the meaning, purpose, utility and intent of professionalism (Gewirtz, et al., 2009). Nevertheless, Evetts (2009) identifies three distinct trends in the discourses about professionalism that have emerged in both scholarly, technical and popular literature over time. These trends are:

1. Occupational professionalism;
2. Professionalism as an ideology;
3. Organisational professionalism.

Occupational professionalism is framed within the occupational group and gives gravitas to collegial authority. It is typified by an environment of autonomous judgement (Evetts, 2009). This concept of professionalism is consistent with the most typical debates about professionalism concerned with issues of specialised knowledge, collegiality, autonomy and responsibility (Furlong, 2011; Gewirtz, et al., 2009). Occupational professionalism provides the autonomy and responsibility central to teaching, as teachers must regularly make fine grained decisions about the learning needs of individual young people (Connell, 2009; Gale & Densmore, 2003; Gewirtz, et al., 2009; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). At its ideal, occupational professionalism has the potential to contribute to a strong discourse of quality improvement.

Professionalism as an ideology refers to the efforts of insider groups to give themselves advantage or monopoly control of a specialised work area (Larson, 2013). Marketisation, an audit culture and the concomitant neoliberal socio-political ideology described in Section 2.4 (p. 40) and Section 2.5.1 (p. 43) creates an environment that is deeply suspicious of professions, in particular the kind of professionalism as an ideology described here. Professions are seen to be anti-competitive monopolies and in need of reigning in (Fels, 1997). The suspicion is doubly so for professions that do not enjoy the force-field-like protection of high status and a perceived arcane knowledge base. UK governments, for example, have leveraged the rhetoric of professionalism as an ideology in the service of a so-called ‘new professionalism’ of teachers in the English school education system (Walker, et al., 2011), paralleling a period of centralised control and direction, driven by relentless government education reform (Tomlinson, 2005). A similar phenomenon has been noted in the US (Stone-Johnson, 2013). As ‘new professionalism’ places the locus of professionalism outside the realm of the teacher-self, it is a model that is more a discourse about quality assurance than it is about quality improvement.

The discursive practices of organisational professionalism seek to utilise professionalism as a means to raise quality through the imposition of standards. Organisational professionalism is

characterised by notions of imposed control, accountability and competencies and a strong managerialism (Evetts, 2009). Page (2012), for example, identifies the English shift from teachers being occupational to organisational professionals with the abolition of the General Teaching Council of England (GTCE). Organisational professionalism dominates in the field of education in the global metropole, derived of long evolving neoliberal policy setting in the global north, originating in the US then finding its way to Australia via the UK (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009).

In a vein similar to Sachs (2003a), Gale and Densmore (2003) challenge the neoliberal ideology of recent decades which they see as having diminished teachers and thus the contribution that teachers can make to the lives of young people. They offer the view that traditional notions of professionalism—the work of a body of self-regulated practitioners with deep specialist knowledge capable of making autonomous professional judgements—do not serve teachers well, because such arrangements potentially “both hinder and undermine efforts to achieve a greater pooling of practical and theoretical knowledge, which could be used to construct more democratic schools and societies” (Gale & Densmore, 2003, p. 88). A new democratic professionalism, they contend, calls for teachers to find ways to interact and collaborate with non-professionals—students, parents and the community—enabling them more to justly represent the needs of their diverse constituency. For Sachs (2003a), any attempt simply to revert to a more traditional occupational professionalism would be counter to the interests of teachers, as it fails to connect to the sources of support and generative dialogue with those outside the profession that hold the potential to develop the effectiveness and meaningfulness of teachers’ work. The key stakeholders for teachers, outside the professional itself, are students and their parents.

### **2.7.1. Professional identity**

The literature on teacher professional identity is closely tied to the body of research on teacher professionalism (Mockler, 2011). While it is a growing field, there is little agreement on the meaning of the term (Canrinus, 2011; Mockler, 2011)—indeed, many researchers who write

on professional identity assume that the term is self-explanatory (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). In this study, following the views of Day and Gu (2010) and Canrinus (2011), professional identity is understood as teachers' sense of "the teacher they wish to become" (Canrinus, 2011, p. 3) and is inextricably bound up with personal identity (Beijaard, et al., 2004; Monteiro, 2015) which is, in turn, "an important aspect of human agency" (Bandura, 2008, p. 91).

Professional identity is a projection of the self and, as it reflects an ideal of what teachers wish to be, it is closely aligned to teachers' notion of the exemplary teacher. There are connections here to Bandura's (1997) notion of self-efficacy. Bandura (1994) defines self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p. 78). Bandura (1982) understands self-efficacy, though, as only one mechanism, albeit a "central" and "pervasive" one (Bandura, 2006, p. 170), of the broader concept of human agency—"the power to originate actions for given purposes" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3)—which can be exercised personally, collectively or by proxy (Bandura, 2000).

Agency captures the notion of a confidence born of a critique of forces acting upon the individual and the collective, and a sense of power to control the conditions of one's own and others' lives (Bandura, 1997). Teacher agency is a notion that looks outwards on a macro-level to the socio-political factors that influence professional destiny rather than look inward on a micro-level to the classroom factors that influence student learning. A focus on teacher self-efficacy would be more likely to accept educational norms and work within them, whereas a focus on teacher agency may lead to the questioning of norms and agitation for change, and challenge or resistance to existing structures. It is teachers' agency, both individual and collective, rather than the narrower interest in teacher's personal or collective self-beliefs which are of the most relevance to the current study. Agency is a concept that is utilised and developed in this thesis commencing in Section 5.4 (p. 134).

Professional identity has sometimes been controlled from the outside (Sachs, 2003b) with the concomitant danger that this eats away at teacher-selves. Clarke (2013) notes that professional standards do not just describe practice, but also “tend to *standardize people* in reductive and limiting ways” (p. 490, emphasis in original). Professional standards, in defining what a teacher and teaching ‘look like’, play their role in forming the teacher and, by extension, influence how the priorities of teacher professional learning are perceived (Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2006). Moreover, the primacy of professional judgement (Section 2.6.2, page 50) as a key facet of the highly relational work that teachers do means that exercising professional judgement forms a quintessential part of the professional identity of teachers. Threats from accountability and regulatory regimes to the subsidiarity afforded to teachers in their professional judgement is ultimately a threat to teachers’ professional identity. Alongside Gale and Densmore (2003), Sachs (2003a) proposes that these threats to teacher professionalism can be addressed by a transformative professionalism that is ‘activist’, by which she means collaborative, passionate, self-directed, and strongly ethical.

### **2.7.2. Professional ethics**

As teachers’ professional identity is so bound to who they are as a human person, “the problem of being a teacher is primarily an ethical question” (Brook, 2009, p. 46) and is deeply ontological. The ethical dimension of teacher professional identity centres on what is distinctive about teaching and why it matters (Monteiro, 2015). It follows that as the formation of the teacher is deeply ontological, and professional standards are seen to be axiomatic to professional identity (Devos, 2010; Furbish, 2011), then the ontology of professional standards is of critical importance. Despite these connections, however, the ontology of professional standards is largely ignored in the literature (Dall’Alba, 2009b; Webster-Wright, 2010).

Mausethagen and Granlund (2012) identify the distinction between the discourse of teacher professionalism proffered by the Norwegian government, focusing on quality assurance, and a parallel discourse of teacher professionalism adopted by the teachers’ union which takes a

more abiding interest, among other things, in teacher professional ethics. This role of teacher trade unions would be difficult to export to countries such as Australia, where the polarised nature of union politics, and Australian unionism's long-term preoccupation with wages, salaries and conditions limit their ability to take on a professional role. Cribb (2009) describes the tension that teacher professionals can feel between fulfilling whatever they see to be their moral purpose and responding to corporate responsibilities and accountabilities which sustain the institution which employs their services. This tension is precisely why the responsibility for professional ethics lies outside of institutional or government-as-employer authorities. *Quality Matters* (see Section 1.2.3.1, p. 30) identified professional ethics as a key concern of any self-regulating professional body (Ramsey, 2000), but such a body of teachers is rare anywhere in the world. The College of Teaching, established in 2015 in the UK, is one example of such an emergent institution (Section 1.2.1.2, p. 11). While professional ethics are occasionally mentioned in the literature on teacher professionalism in a general way, "the education field... has no [specific] tradition of Professional Ethics" (Monteiro, 2015, p. 72); there is no Hippocratic Oath in teaching (Shepherd, 2013).

### **2.7.3. Ontology understood as 'becoming' professional**

The non-dualistic ontology of Heidegger (1962) encourages us to conceive of our relation to things outside ourselves and with which we interact as inextricably bound with our being-in-the-world. Heidegger uses the German word *Dasein* (Being There) to refer to Being as something beyond the Cartesian self:

Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is being; what we are is being, and so is how we are. Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in *Dasein*; in the 'there is'. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 26)

It follows that, when we are authentically being-in-the-world, there is not distinction between the human person and things but unity: "The compound expression 'Being-in-the-world'

indicates in the very way we have coined it, that it stands for a unitary phenomenon” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 78). This Heideggerian ontology presumes “our *entwinement with others and things* as our primary form of being” (Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2010, p. 107, emphasis in original). When teachers relate to professional standards in any way, the standards are a part of their being-in-the-world. In the present of *Dasein*, Heidegger asserts that what is cared about is that which aids *Dasein* to connect with and be at home in the world. It follows that identifying what really matters to a person (in the context of the current study, what really matters professionally to the teacher) identifies their connectedness to the world. Narrowing this point to the context of the present study, we are defined by how we act and interact with professional standards in the world, more than by what we think of them (Dreyfus, 2007).

We are always in the process of becoming (Heidegger, 1962), a concept developed in terms of becoming *professional* by Dall’Alba (2009b; 2009a; Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2010). The understanding of professional as always in the process of becoming has implications both for the methodology and the methods within the theoretical framework for this study. Its relevance to the methodology of this research is that it affirms the importance of the situatedness of the teacher within a culture which is both defining and limiting. Critical methodology is needed to understand that situatedness in terms of the professional standards discourses which strongly influence future thinking in the teaching professional. Its relevance to the methods used in this research develops from the view that teachers’ professional being, their ontological self, is expressed in the action of doing their work (Dall’Alba, 2009b).

The importance of the ontology of teaching was elucidated in the Australian context very early in the debate about professional standards. *Standards of Professional Practice* (Section 1.2.2.2, p. 24) noted that “teachers teach according to their ‘being’: who teachers are is absolutely the foundation of how they teach” (Mackay, et al., 2000, p. 10). Somewhere along the way to the construction of the AITSL Standards, the point was lost. The understanding of ontology elucidated in this section is, nonetheless, highly apposite to the third research sub-question: How do professional standards impact on the professional that teachers *become*?



#### 2.7.4. Teacher status

There has been an increasing appeal to the status of teachers as a rationale for the introduction of professional standards for teachers in many jurisdictions around the world (Cheng, 2009; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009; Fuller, Goodwyn, & Francis-Brophy, 2013; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Jensen, 2012; Monteiro, 2015). It is frequently implied, or claimed, that teacher professionalism has, or should have, the same status as that of doctors and lawyers (AITSL, 2014c; DeCourcy, 2012; Lilja, 2014; Onderwijsraad, 2013; Sahlberg, 2010b), ignoring the reality that such assertions can easily be construed as self-serving professionalisation rather than authentic professionalism (Larson, 2013). AITSL (2011) and BOSTES (2015a) make the direct claim that professional standards will raise the status of teaching, as do some interest groups and professional associations (ACE, 2002; Leslie, 2013; OECD, 2011; PTI, 2014; Stewart, 2011; 2013), governments and their agencies (DEETYA, 2000; DfEE, 1998; Fuller, et al., 2013; Gray, 2010; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, 2007; Mahony & Hextall, 2000; B. Nelson, 2002) and scholars (Ingvarson & Hattie, 2008; Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2006; Ingvarson, Kleinhenz, & Wilkinson, 2007; Ingvarson, 2010b; 2013).

The desire for increased status is also closely allied to the normalising discourse on the professionalisation of teaching (Foss Lindblad & Lindblad, 2009). Indeed, as discussed in Section 1.2.2.1 (p. 20), professional standards for teaching in Australia and a concomitant registration body finds its genesis in the 1998 Senate inquiry leading to the publication of *A Class Act* (Senate of the Australian Parliament, 1998). The connection between professionalisation and status is reaffirmed in the statement of the then Australian Education Minister that:

The first step to achieving a quality education, which is so critical for the future of young Australians and our nation, is to lift the quality, professionalisation and status of the teaching profession. (Pyne, 2014, p. 1)

Wright (2012), reflecting on the course of teacher professionalisation reforms in the UK,

argues that status operates in the service of “an assemblage of neoliberal logics” (p. 292), as a “fantasy of empowerment” (p. 280), providing an illusion of freedom where none really exists. Indeed, there is no evidence in the literature that the institution of professional standards has raised the status of teaching in jurisdictions such as the UK and the US where standards have been in place for a number of years.

## **2.8. LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY**

The purpose of this literature review has been to explicate some of the significant themes against which teachers’ perceptions of the place of professional standards in their work might be reflexively interpreted in the analysis phase of this study. The review opened with an explication of the contemporary neoliberal ecology of education of which professional standards are clearly a part. The review also made clear that teachers face significant regimes of accountability in their work. An exploration of teachers’ perceptions of professional standards will need to consider how teachers negotiate these regimes of accountability. In addition, a significant body of literature supporting the teacher quality debate has underpinned a broad discourse around aspects of teacher improvement, including notions of capacity building, teacher professional judgement and the importance of professional learning. Teachers’ perceptions of professional standards will also need to be reflexively interpreted against these notions. Finally, the review considered the literature relating to professionalism, particularly as it pertains to matters of identity, ethics and status. Overall, the literature review confirms that there is in fact a multi-layered multiplicity of discourses which teachers must negotiate as they face the demands placed upon them in a standards environment. How they do this is the subject of this study. Accordingly, attention turns now to the methodology employed to elicit the conceptions of professional standards that inhere teachers’ experience of the AITSL Standards.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design articulates the means to effectively answer the research question with the intention to produce new and useful knowledge. The research design that follows is intended to facilitate a warrantable, generalisable and trustworthy response to the research question: What is the impact of professional standards on the teaching profession?

#### 3.1.1. Rationale for the chosen research approach

This research is a phenomenographic critical case study. Views differ widely concerning the nature of case study. Stake (2005), for example, asserts that case study is not a methodology but rather a strategic choice of the subject of research. Creswell (2013) explicitly describes it as methodology while Robson (2011) refers to it as a type of research strategy. Perhaps the most widely cited case study theoretician, Yin (2009), argues for the “needed definition of case studies as a research method” (p. 15). He repeats the claim for case study as a research method in more recent work (Yin, 2011a; 2012). If, however, case study were to be considered a *method* then data gathering strategies would be prescribed and this is not generally proposed in the case study literature. Indeed, the encouragement to use a wide variety of data gathering strategies concomitant to the research context is usual (Hakim, 2000; Stake, 1995; 2005; Thomas, 2011). Unhappy with the use of either the term ‘method’ or ‘methodology’ and arguing for a ‘prototype of case study’, VanWynsberghe and Khan (2007) point out the common confusion between methodology and method, the latter term referring to “technique, procedure, or means for gathering evidence or collecting data” (p. 3). In an attempt to resolve these confusions around case study Thomas (2011) has gone furthest in resolving the issues around case study definition raised by VanWynsberghe and Khan, proposing a typology which offers an organisational structure for case studies. Thomas’ (2011) case study typology will be adopted for this study and the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions underpinning phenomenography will guide its undertaking. Case study typology methodology will be explicated below in Sections 3.2.1 (p. 72).

Phenomenography is related to, but to be distinguished from, phenomenology (Richardson, 1999). Both phenomenology and phenomenography share a non-dualistic ontology, the theoretical antecedents of which were explored in Section 2.7.3 (p. 61). Phenomenology, though, seeks to describe the essence of people's experience of the world through philosophical introspection (Marton, 1986); phenomenography, in contradistinction, has "an empirical orientation" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 116) and seeks to describe the finite number of ways in which people experience a phenomenon and to understand "the architecture of this variation" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 117). Phenomenography will be explicated more fully in Section 3.2.2 (p. 74).

Having noted these caveats, the strength of the case study approach to addressing a research problem is the depth of analysis which case study allows. The case study approach adopted in this research seeks to give voice to teachers in the discourses about teacher professionalism, a voice threatened by the technical rationality of standards (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; López-Pastor, Monjas, & Manrique, 2011; Timmermans & Berg, 2003; Tuinamuaana, 2011; Whitty, 2002). The Catholic Education Office (CEO) Sydney is a critical case (Patton, 2002) or what Flyvbjerg (2011) describes as a "most likely" case (p. 307). That is to say, the rationale for a case study approach focusing on a high performing system of schools is that such a case can be illustrative of the limit of the possibilities for professional standards in developing the teacher profession.

As was noted in the defining of the research problem of this study, the enactment strategies of teachers in response to professional standards have been under-researched. A further rationale for the use of a case study typology is that case study allows for the examination of teachers' perceptions of professional standards within their context; understanding processes within their context is a key strength of the case study approach to research (Tharenou, Donohue, & Cooper, 2007).

Phenomenographic methodology is useful as it has been specifically developed to explore the nature of the relationship between subject and phenomenon (Bowden, 2000; 2005; Collier-

Reed & Ingerman, 2013; Marton, 1986; Richardson, 1999), in this case, the intersubjective space between teachers and professional standards. The knowledge generated by phenomenographic research has also been noted as being highly apposite to professional practices such as teaching (Limberg, 2008).

### **3.1.2. Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework makes clear the worldview within which a particular piece of research takes place (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). It provides a yardstick against which the truth claims of research can be measured and a guide to both researcher and reader in the search for understanding and the building of new knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Krauss, 2005). A theoretical framework is underpinned by valid, cohesive philosophical elements that, tensioned one to the other, provide solid foundations for the research to which they give rise (Jabareen, 2009). Any particular research paradigm is not the only way to see the world or investigate a problem. Rather, it best emerges from the positionality of the researcher and the purpose of the research (Gibbons & Sanderson, 2002; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Sandel, 2011). Indeed, it is Stronach's view that methodological partisanship—"the absolute convention of our times"—is "self-defeating" for research that seeks to uncover new knowledge (Stronach, 2010, p. 154), rather than add to a burgeoning but unenlightening repetitious store of contemporary information. Accordingly, the current research amalgamates various research elements gleaned from the literature in order to provide a coherent theoretical framework which, in its risk-taking, opens pathways to new thinking about professional standards for teachers. Table 3.1 presents an overview of the theoretical framework for this study. Each of the elements of Table 3.1 will be explicated in turn in the following sections.

*Table 3.1: Overview of Theoretical Framework*

Paradigm	Qualitative, interpretivist, critical
Ontology	Non-dualistic
Epistemology	Social constructionist
Methodology	Phenomenographic critical case study
Data collection methods	Semi-structured interviews
Data analysis	First Phase: Phenomenographic analysis Second Phase: Critical analysis
Sample	Maximum variation purposive sample

### 3.1.3. Paradigm

There has been criticism of the notion of the paradigm as limiting, artificial, clichéd and ultimately unhelpful to research design, the most unhelpful distinction being the one between qualitative and quantitative paradigms (Ercikan & Roth, 2006; Gorard, 2004; Niglas, 1999). Implicit criticism of the so-called ‘paradigm wars’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), however, fails to note that a qualitative paradigm in its distinction from a quantitative one is much more a philosophic distinction than a methodological one (Krauss, 2005). The term ‘quantitative paradigm’ is still widely used as an umbrella term (for example Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Yin, 2011b,). In this research, though, qualitative is used as a term referring to a specific paradigm, typified by the view that research is an interpretive act whereby the researcher makes non-mathematical judgements about research participants’ multiple constructed realities of the world (Higgs & Cherry, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) survey of the historical turns in the evolution of qualitative research offers at least the clarity that qualitative researchers are committed to “an emic, ideographic, case-based position, which directs their attention to the specifics of particular cases” (p. 9). The intentions of this research to privilege the voices of teachers’ experience of professional standards is well served by this qualitative paradigm (Table 3.1).

Reflections in most recent decades on qualitative research approaches also acknowledge the commensurability of interpretivist and critical approaches (Gibbons & Sanderson, 2002; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Critical analysis provides the etic perspective which complements the emic one. It is appropriate to qualitative research such as this thesis, which seeks, in part, to reveal layers of connections between research participants and the influence of their socio-political context—a context of which they may or may not be fully aware (Apple, 2006; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Accordingly, critical analysis has been proposed as an appropriate second phase in the analysis of phenomenographic data (Collier-Reed & Ingerman, 2013) and will be employed in this study.

### 3.1.4. Ontology

The ontological assumption of the current research is that while policy authors will have had a particular intention regarding how they wished for professional standards documents to be understood, in reality people will interpret teacher professional standards in qualitatively different ways. Rather than adopting the view that there is an objective reality that represents the correct understanding of teacher professional standards and a subjective world of teachers' *perceptions* of them, the current research adopts the view, after phenomenography, that these variant experiences of teacher professional standards are not separate, but interrelated (Collier-Reed & Ingerman, 2013; Collier-Reed, 2006) and constitute the *conceptions* which are the unit of analysis for this research (Trigwell, 1997). A further note about conceptions as the unit of analysis is made in Section 3.2.1, (p. 73). This ontological perspective is consistent with the non-dualistic ontology adopted in the field of phenomenography (Marton, 2000; Marton & Booth, 1997). Such an ontological perspective is significant for this research; it suggests that the *implementation* plans of policymakers with respect to teacher professional standards may in fact be quite different to the policy *enactment* of professional standards by teachers themselves. The former is frequently the focus of research and the latter frequently ignored (Ball, et al., 2012). A non-dualistic ontology (Table 3.1, page 68) privileges teachers' perspectives on professional standards and presents the opportunity for new insights and knowledge about how teacher professional standards operate 'on the ground'. This research

also proceeds from the ontological assumption emerging out of Foucauldian scholarship that “there is no individual, no self, that is ontologically prior to power” (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 87). This ontological positioning assumes importance in the second phase analysis of teacher’s conceptions of professional standards that is an aspect of this study.

### **3.1.5. Epistemology**

The current research adopts the antifoundationalist view that “knowledge is contingent and bound up more with power than with truth” (St. Pierre, 2002, p. 399). This is consistent with Foucault’s view of the complex, strategic interrelatedness of power and knowledge which he termed power-knowledge (Ball, 2013; Foucault, 1997a; 1988a). This research relies on “the structure of the sample, and of the interviews, to do the work of defining, and even, in a non-empiricist sense of ‘representing’, what is happening” (Pusey, 1992, p. 24). This study will privilege the perspectives of teacher practitioners for what they can contribute to a better understanding of how discourses operate in teachers’ encounters with professional standards.

Section 3.1.4 (p. 69) identified the ontological assumptions in this study of the non-dualistic ways in which teachers build conceptions of professional standards. Further to this point, teachers’ perceptions of the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Standards are revealed to the researcher not as “psychological entities somehow residing in the minds of individuals” (Richardson, 1999, p. 72), but rather as discursive practices, bound to the discursive repertoires of the education culture within which teachers’ work and to which teacher professional standards contribute (Richardson, 1999; Säljö, 1997). The implication of these social constructionist epistemological assumptions (Table 3.1, page 68) for the current study is that there is a variety of ways in which professional standards are conceived by teachers rather than a single ‘right’ way but also that this variety of experiences will be logically related (Åkerlind, 2012) and available to the researcher through the storytelling of research participants.

‘Discursive practices’ is employed here in the sense that Foucault (2002) used it, to denote the attitudes, behaviours, processes, and ways of thinking that are evident in the referent



discourses that people use in their speaking about teacher professional standards. Discursive practices derive from “a paradigm authorized by institutional power”; in order to express their views about professional standards, teachers use words, which “must be treated as traces of the practices that created them” (Franklin-Brown, 2012, p. 29). Making sense of teachers’ words by connecting them to discourses and discursive practices is central to the phenomenographic methodology discussed in Section 3.2.2 (p. 74) below, which seeks to reveal the finite number of ways in which teachers conceive professional standards.

Recognising discourse as the means by which humans engage in the process of validating and revalidating the beliefs which guide their actions focuses attention on the importance of the creativity of human responses to discourses as a unit of study (Mezirow, 1996). Discourses are fabrics carefully woven from just a selection of the artefacts available—speech, texts, facts, attitudes, assertions, arguments, postulates and so on—in order to manufacture a particular perspective on the truth which, for all its truth claims, competes with contesting discourses for a privileged position (MacLure, 2003).

Recognition of the importance of discourses within professional standards is reflected in one of the sub-questions which form part of this research, namely, how do teachers negotiate the contesting discourses operating within professional standards and how do they assent to those discourses that “constitute their professional selves and teaching practices in relation to games of truth” (Stickney, 2012, p. 651)?

### **3.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

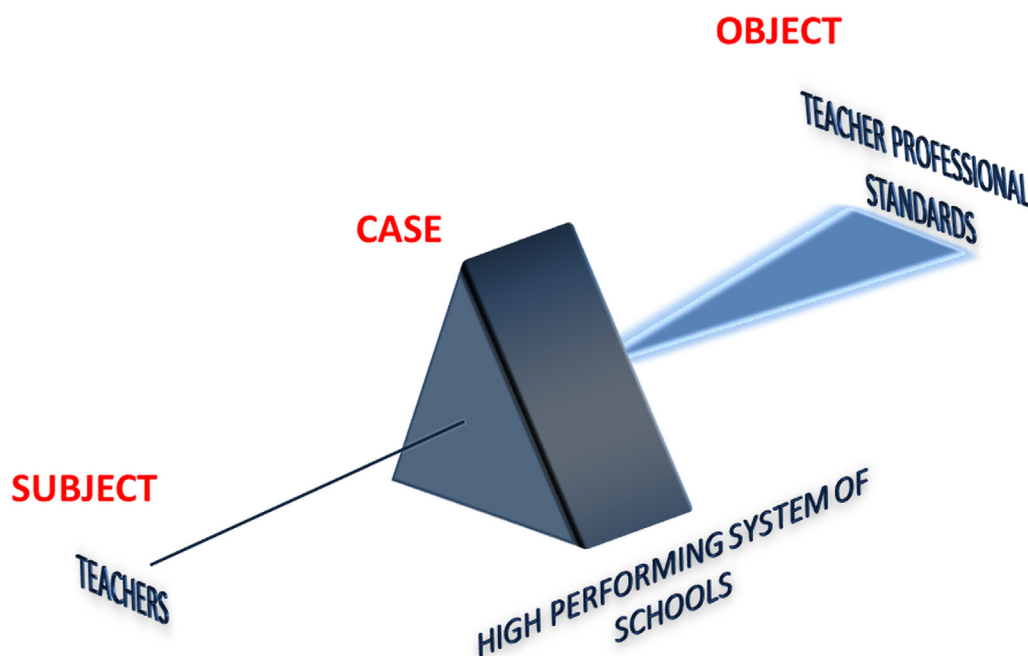
This section will discuss the methodology of phenomenography which will be utilised within a typology of case study as proposed by Thomas (2011). The combined methodology of phenomenography and typology of case study provides the most coherent combination of research approaches which match the positionality of the researcher and the purpose of this research (Table 3.1, page 68). The location of the current research in this way leads to a consideration of the strategies and techniques of data selection, collection and analysis that are

consistent with and apposite to the adopted research methodology. This will be the subject of *Research Methods* (Section 3.3, p. 75).

### 3.2.1. Typology of case study

Thomas' (2011) case study typology offers a sequential way for researchers to be clear in their identification of the subject, object, purpose, approach and process involved in case study research. Each of these elements will be considered briefly and in turn, applying Thomas' typology to the current research problem. Out of this exercise a clear methodological approach to the current research emerges.

Thomas' case study typology provides clarity regarding the subject and object in case study research and the relationship between them. While the identification of the subject is usual in case study research, the object is often ignored or not well articulated. The subject, object and case for this study are illustrated in Figure 3.1.



*Figure 3.1: Case study typology. Teachers' conceptions, refracted through the case, are the unit of analysis for this study.*

Without a defined object, a case study has no focus or purpose, because the research ends up describing a subject but adds little to the body of knowledge in helping to explain or

understand the object. The particular subject of the case should be selected because it is a “revealing example through which the lineaments of the object can be refracted” (Thomas, 2011, p. 514). An object of study is particularly important in a phenomenographic study such as this one because it provides the context and shared experience that allows for comparable conversations between researcher and participants; this provides a basis for the later meaningful decontextualisation of data in phenomenographic analysis (Collier-Reed, 2006). This approach to case study is also highly complementary to the non-dualistic ontology of phenomenography discussed in Section 2.7.3 (p. 61) and Section 3.1.4 (p. 69), building on the assumption, as it does, that there are not separate realities of the perceiver (the subject) and the reality being perceived (the object), but rather, the intersubjective space between the teacher and professional standards is where a variety of discourses about professional standards are nuanced and make meaning for people. Thomas (2011) defines the subject as a “practical, historical unity” (p. 512), in this case, teachers. The object he defines as the “analytical or theoretical frame” (p. 512), in this case, professional standards. Research into teachers and their voices, as proposed earlier in this paper, is the subject-prism through which understanding of teacher professional standards will be refracted using the AITSL Standards as the object of the case.

Thomas (2011) defines the purpose of a case study as “analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods” (p. 513); in this case, to identify and explore the variety of ways in which teachers perceive, negotiate and enact professional standards. Thomas’ case study typology seeks to identify the unit of analysis as an element of the subject, an approach which refines and makes more explicit Yin’s (2009) explication of the importance of the unit of analysis for clarity of purpose in case study research. Interpreting this for the current research, teachers’ various conceptions of professional standards are the unit of analysis (Figure 3.1, p. 72). As noted in Section 3.1.5 (p. 70) on epistemology, teachers’ conceptions are expressed and are accessible to the researcher through teachers’ discussion of their discursive practices.

A research approach is required that suits the particular unit of analysis of this study, which is confirmed above as teachers' conceptions of professional standards. Phenomenography is ideally suited to this purpose, as it has a particular focus on the notion of *conception* as its unit of analysis (Collier-Reed & Ingerman, 2013) and its ontological and epistemological assumptions are consistent with those of the current research. Phenomenography will be addressed in the next section.

The final element of case study typology to be considered is process. Therefore, after considering phenomenography as a methodology, Section 3.3 (p. 75) will describe phenomenography's strategies for the collection of data and techniques to analyse it. Phenomenographic methods appropriately address the process needs of the current study.

In summary, this research is a case study of the variety of ways in which teachers' conceive of professional standards utilising phenomenography as its key research approach, a research design decision emerging out of a consideration of Thomas' case study typology.

### **3.2.2. Phenomenography**

Phenomenography was proposed as a research approach emerging out of the work of Marton (1981; 1986) and colleagues at the University of Gothenburg and has since led to its implementation in clusters around the world, including in Australia (Dall'Alba & Hasselgren, 1996). In the first comprehensive and seminal work on phenomenography, Marton and Booth (1997) describe phenomenography as a research approach, but since then, work emanating from Australia (Bowden & Green, 2005; Bowden & Walsh, 2000; Dall'Alba & Hasselgren, 1996) has refined phenomenography into a substantive methodology.

The stated purpose of phenomenography is the study of the "description, analysis and understanding of experiences" (Marton, 1981, p. 171). Its focus is not on asking the question *why* the world is the way it is (first-order perspectives), but rather the question: What do people *conceive* about the way the world is (second-order perspectives) (Marton, 1981). It also

develops the notion of people's ways of understanding not as idiosyncratic but as belonging to 'categories of description' that emerge out of the non-dualistic interrelatedness of the subject and the object (Richardson, 1999; Säljö, 1997). A more refined description of the purpose of phenomenography is that it "is one way of helping to surface and consider the meta-themes that—while not the true story of any one of us—at some level help to define the story of all of us" (Cherry, 2005, p. 62). With respect to the current research, this translates to the view that an individual teacher's conception of professional standards is not idiosyncratic, but rather belongs to one of a number of categories of description that emerge out of the interplay between teacher-subjects' discursive repertoires, derived from their immersion in education culture and the object-professional standards which they enact when called upon to implement standards as policy. Key to phenomenography is the view that while there will certainly be variety in people's conceptions in relation to any particular phenomenon, "each phenomenon, concept, or principle can be understood in a limited number of qualitatively different ways" (Marton, 1986, p. 31). Such a methodology promises to reveal a finite number of ways in which teachers engage with the AITSL Standards, such that the conceptions of professional standards revealed are manageable for the purposes of critical analysis of the AITSL Standards and their potential impact on teachers in their professional judgements.

### **3.3. RESEARCH METHODS**

Phenomenography offers a well developed, although flexible, set of strategies and techniques for sample selection, data gathering and data analysis techniques that together make up the methods of its particular research approach (Table 3.1, page 68). This section provides the rationale and strategy for the selection of appropriate research participants, then goes on to explain how data was ethically and validly sourced from those participants. An explication of a two phase analysis of the data which addresses the research questions will follow. Finally, questions of research rigour will be considered.

#### **3.3.1. Participants**

This subsection will outline the rationale for the selection of the research participants,

strategies used in the selection of schools for the case study, and strategies used for recruitment of participants within selected schools. The decision to employ a purposive research sample will also be justified.

#### **3.3.1.1. *Rationale for the selection of participants***

This study is limited to ‘Proficient’ teachers. ‘Proficient’ refers to the second of four career stages that are defined within the AITSL Standards. ‘Proficient’ is the highest mandated standard, the higher third and fourth career stages being voluntary levels. New Scheme teachers, those who entered teaching in New South Wales (NSW) after 1 October 2004, are expected to achieve ‘Proficient’ status within three years of full-time teaching. Teachers whose careers commencement predates 1 October 2004 have been deemed ‘Proficient’ (NSW Government, 2004; NSWIT, 2012b; NSWIT, 2012c). In 2014, the NSW Government made legislative changes to the arrangements for pre-1 October 2004 teachers to bring them under the same conditions as New Scheme teachers for maintenance of accreditation (Bruniges, et al., 2013; DEC, 2013; NSW Government, 2014). These changes are fully implemented from 1 January, 2018.

The particular category of schools to which this study is limited is a high performing school system. The rationale for this focus is based on the view established through the work of Fullan (2005; 2010). He argues that vertical structures at the district level, and a positive learning culture (Fullan, 2011a), are critical in providing the support, positive pressure, and capacity building that enables schools to respond to a rapidly changing education agenda. A high performing system is likely, therefore, to present the extent and limits of what is possible with professional standards. Systemic schools operated by CEO Sydney, qualify according to this criteria. CEO Sydney has strong system processes (for example CEO & SACS Board, 2010; CEO, 2010a; 2010b) of the kind which Oski (2010) concludes are highly effective in the parallel Melbourne CEO. A number of reports and studies have attested to the quality of the CEO Sydney as a high performing system of schools (for example Crowther, Andrews, & Conway, 2013; Gamble, Stannard, Benjamin, & Burke, 2004; Turkington, 2004). In addition

to these factors, the greater gender mix in secondary education teaching (ABS, 2012), higher levels of school complexity, and participant accessibility, directed the research towards secondary schools. Accordingly, the sample for this research is limited to a maximum variation purposive sample of 'Proficient' teachers in the 40 secondary schools of CEO Sydney (Table 3.1, page 68). The means of identifying variety in the selection of participants and the resultant variety in the sample is discussed in Section 3.3.1.2.1 (p. 78).

A special note must be made here about the role of co-researchers as participants. Three research assistants were engaged in this study and this approach to the research is justified in Section 3.3.2.2 (p. 91). The involvement of the research assistants in the analysis phase of the research marks them as co-researchers, an important source of validation and triangulation in phenomenographic research (Bowden, 2005). Inasmuch as the research assistants were recently retired principals, aware of, but not totally immersed in the professional standards debate in NSW, they were also and at the same time research participants; the views that they shared in the regular peer debriefing sessions were a part of the emergent overall analysis. The peer debriefing process is specifically addressed in Section 3.3.4.4 (p. 100).

### **3.3.1.2. *Sample framework***

The words 'sample' and 'populations' and the implication that a sample is or should be necessarily representative as the basis of a subsequent statistical generalisation has strongly positivist associations that are not reflective of the methodological intent of qualitative research in general (Yin, 2011b) and phenomenography in particular; nonetheless, the use of the term 'sample' is pervasive. Phenomenographic studies typically use maximum variation purposive samples (Bowden, 2000; Green, 2005; Trigwell, 1997). This study maintains this approach, so as to maximise the variation in subject-teachers' conceptions of the object-professional standards within the case, CEO Sydney secondary schools (Table 3.1, p. 68). Maximum variation purposive sampling allows for the full range of differences on factors which have been identified as relevant to a study (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

### 3.3.1.2.1. Identifying variety in the selection of participants

As indicated in Section 3.2.2 (p. 75), the key element in the selection of a sample for a phenomenographic case study is the maximisation of variety within the limits of the research problem and research questions. Consideration should be given to such factors as gender, experience, professional role and teaching context to achieve this. Each of these factors will now be considered in turn

Gender is generally considered to account for variety in a sample and for this reason alone both female and male participants were sought. The female/male ratio in CEO Sydney secondary schools is 60/40 (CECNSW, 2011); while it is not immediately apparent that gender is an attribute on which teachers' perceptions may vary, gender is one of the "taken-for-granted concepts" of which the researcher should always be aware (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 28).

With respect to experience, New Scheme teachers are those who commenced teaching after 1 October 2004 and have responsibility for attaining the status of 'Proficient' against the AITSL Standards within three years of commencement in the profession (NSWIT, 2006; NSWIT, 2012b). Between 2004–2013, they were also required by the NSW Institute of Teachers Act (2004) (NSW Government, 2004) to maintain their accreditation with the Institute of Teachers through a designated 100 hours of professional development completed over five years. From 2014, this same requirement for 100 hours of professional development over five years is now stipulated within the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 (Amended 2014), the administration of which rests with the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards New South Wales (BOSTES). NSW teachers yet to be bound by this regulation at the time of data collection for this research comprised a substantial minority of 38% of teachers in NSW (primary and secondary) (ABS, 2012; NSWIT, 2012a). While all teachers will ultimately be regulated under the Act by 2018, it is reasonable to assume that it will be a number of years before these more experienced, non-New Scheme teachers will be heavily impacted by accreditation regulations.



These facts suggested that New Scheme status might be considered as a factor in participant selection for maximum variation.

The next sample attribute to be considered was teacher role, that is, whether the participant was a regular classroom teacher or a Coordinator 1 or 2, defined under local industrial agreement as a teacher with responsibility for the coordination, support and supervision of a pastoral or curriculum area (Fair Work Commission, 2013). The nature of their roles may have some impact on the way in which they perceive or are exposed to professional standards in the course of their work, so it is reasonable to consider teacher role as a factor in this research. Only teachers with experience of four years or greater with 'Proficient' status (achieved or pending) were selected as research participants, as this is commensurate with the readiness of teachers to engage in reflective work at the level of a hermeneutics of education (Vandenberg, 2008). This research decision was later validated by one of the research participants who commented "*I think that it takes you two or three years to actually move past that survival stage*" (Sara, St Abigail's).

Finally, consideration of the context in which teachers work offers a *prima facie* potential to maximise variation of teachers' conceptions for this study. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a publicly available metric that assisted in developing variety in the research participants' school context. The ICSEA, created for use on the federal government's *myschool.edu.au* website is a sophisticated measure of advantage and school similarity. It sources information about socio-educational advantage directly from student enrolment records rather than solely and indirectly from Australian Bureau of Statistics census data (ACARA, 2012; 2013). Critics of the ICSEA argue that the index is systematically biased, overstating the socio-educational advantage of students in government schools and underestimating the socio-educational advantage of students in non-government schools (Preston, 2010); such a bias may be evidenced by the relatively higher percentage of students from low socio-economic status (SES) homes to be found in government schools (Gonski, et al., 2011; Teese, 2011). Notwithstanding that argument, there is considerable SES variability

*within* each of the school sectors in Australia, government, Catholic systemic and independent (Nous Group, 2011) and for the purposes of this research the ICSEA, a metric which is formulated more broadly than SES, provides a legitimate measure of relative socio-educational advantage of schools *within* the CEO Sydney system of schools, the case for this research.

In summary, the study sample was developed for maximum variation regarding teachers' conceptions of professional standards, and such a sample required the consideration of factors of gender, experience, professional role among potential research participants and school context. The fact that the case for the study is CEO Sydney secondary schools determined the geographically compact nature of the sample. The resultant sample was geographically compact, yet covered a range of student socio-educational and cultural mixes across a relatively high number of schools.

#### 3.3.1.2.2. Sample size

Having established the strategy for selecting participants for the study and having identified the factors that are of relevance to the research question, the issue of the appropriate number of participants arises. The two criteria of sufficiency and saturation apply to the appropriate sample size in qualitative research (Seidman, 1998). Sufficiency asks the question: Have a range of types of participants been interviewed sufficient to cover the research variables outlined in Section 3.3.1.2.1 (p. 78), disclosing the full range of teachers' conceptions of professional standards? Saturation asks the question: Has the point been reached where no new data or insights are being learned about teachers' conceptions of professional standards? The study of Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) is one of the rare investigations developing guidelines for non-random sample sizes. Their study involving 60 in-depth interviews suggested that saturation might typically occur in as few as 12 interviews. Beyond these considerations, a sample size of 20–30 is typical in phenomenographic research (Åkerlind, Bowden, & Green, 2005; Bowden, 2005).

There are two sample size factors to consider with respect to the current research: sample size of *schools* and sample size of *teachers within schools*. The sample size of schools was seven, and this number provided variety in terms of culture and socio-educational advantage. Variety was determined using researcher knowledge of school community profiles and validated using publicly available data. Detail regarding the variation in the sample of schools is contained in Section 3.3.1.2.4 (p. 82). With respect to the sample size of participants per school, questions concerning sufficiency and saturation were considered throughout the data collection period. Ultimately, a sample of 71 teachers from across seven schools participated in this research. There were between six and 12 participants per school, ensuring thorough variability within the target group. A profile of the research participants sample is provided in Table 3.2. The variation of the sample school by school is also discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.1.2.4.

*Table 3.2: Profile of the research participants*

<i>Profile descriptor</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>percentage</i>
Teachers in all boys' schools	25	35
Teachers in all girls schools	24	34
Teachers in co-educational schools	22	31
Females	44	62
Males	27	38
Curriculum middle leaders	13	18
Pastoral middle leaders	8	11
Other middle leaders	11	16
Classroom teachers	39	55
New Scheme teachers	38	54
Pre-New Scheme teachers	33	46
4–9 years teaching experience	26	37
10–19 years teaching experience	27	38
20–29 years teaching experience	13	18
30+ years teaching experience	5	7

### 3.3.1.2.3. Strategies for sourcing participant referrals

Web-based computer software entitled *MyPL* is an original work developed by the author (A.

Taylor, 2013). *MyPL* assists schools as a replacement for the previous mandatory Personnel Performance Planning and Review (PPPR) (CEO & NSW/ACT IEU, 2007) in CEO Sydney schools. *MyPL* seeks to align teachers' annual planning for their personal professional learning with the AITSL Standards and the school's strategic plan. *MyPL* was used as a catalyst for the recruitment of schools for this research. For the purposes of this research, *MyPL* ensured that teachers selected were sufficiently informed about professional standards to be able to engage as research participants in the current research which addresses teachers' perceptions about those standards. Further information about *MyPL* can be found in Appendix K.

*MyPL* services the needs of internal CEO Sydney PPPR processes (CEO & NSW/ACT IEU, 2007), in addition to engaging teachers in reflecting on the AITSL Standards in the preparation of their personal professional learning plans. School principals who were early adopters of the *MyPL* system provided referral opportunities with their colleague principals. Note here that referral techniques that were employed merely identified the potential schools from which a final limited number of participants were selected. Schools that had registered for use of the *MyPL* tool, it reasonably could be assumed, had an interest in addressing the AITSL Standards with teachers and were relatively advanced with the professional standards agenda. Consequently, these schools could be relied upon to provide participants who were sufficiently well informed about professional standards to be able to provide useful data for this study. This is not an issue for New Scheme teachers, who are familiar with the AITSL Standards through their initial teacher education and/or the AITSL accreditation processes. Non-New Scheme teachers, however, are generally less familiar with the AITSL Standards as they are not required to fully engage with the AITSL Standards until 2018.

#### 3.3.1.2.4. Research sample

This section will describe the way in which—having opened up the field of potential recruits through the catalyst of the *MyPL* (A. Taylor, 2013) online tool—the actual sample for this research was derived. Firstly, the sample type used, purposive sampling, will be briefly

revisited, considering the threats to validity entailed by the approach. An explanation will be provided of how depth and expertise was applied to the selection of participants from within those schools using the technique of ‘referred approval’ (Vallance, 2001) to enhance sample validity. Secondly, a brief explanation will be provided for the selection of schools to provide maximum variability. Finally, a description and illustration of the overall recruitment plan used and a table of anonymised particulars of the research participants relevant to the study will be provided.

The strength of purposive sampling is the relative ease with which it allows a full range of participants to be selected for a sample, while its validity is threatened if representative participants cannot be selected with depth and expertise (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). As indicated in Section 3.3.1.2.3 (p. 82), prior to participant selection, the researcher established a relationship with principals in Sydney CEO schools through the implementation of *MyPL* in their school. These circumstances allowed the use of ‘referred approval’ (Vallance, 2001), a strategy of utilising one’s high credibility contacts to drive voluntary participant commitment. Subject to the expected ethical standards of confidentiality and anonymity, such a strategy has the dual advantages of a high response rate and appropriately affirming participants in their value to the research (Vallance, 2001; see also Midgley, Danaher, & Baguley, 2013).

Utilising the ICSEA metric discussed in Section 3.3.1.2.1 (p. 79), variability across the socio-economic range of schools was attained. The ICSEA for each of Australia’s secondary schools which has an ICSEA available (n=2556, 95.54% of all Australian secondary schools) was first placed in a spreadsheet and categorised according to region—metropolitan, provincial, remote or very remote—as defined on the MySchool website (*myschool.edu.au*). The average ICSEA was calculated for each of these regions, by state and by government versus non-government schools. The results of this survey are detailed in Table 3.3 below.

*Table 3.3: Average ICSEA, Australian secondary schools by state and by government/non-government*

	<i>All</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>TAS</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Gov</i>	<i>Non-gov</i>
All secondary schools	997	1013	1023	996	729	993	972	966	1088	952	1054
Metropolitan	1042	1043	1043	1033	NA	1035	1047	1016	1088	1001	1078
Provincial	976	974	989	969	978	982	981	941	NA	945	1026
Remote	914	829	992	934	805	1001	928	880	NA	915	910
Very remote	731	822	NA	848	643	777	722	906	NA	742	661

The ICSEA of Australian schools (primary and secondary) is 1000 with a standard deviation of 100. It is slightly lower for secondary schools alone, as reported in Table 3.3. It should also be noted that 90.7% of Australian secondary schools are in urban areas (Metropolitan or Provincial; ICSEA average 1009). The metropolitan secondary schools ICSEA average for the state of NSW (1043), in which the research took place, is almost identical with the national average. The ICSEA average of the seven sample schools was 1060 compared to the ICSEA average of all CEO Sydney secondary schools of 1048. Of the seven schools selected for this research, their ICSEA ranged from 1000 to 1087, that is, they ranged across approximately a half of one standard deviation either side of the all metropolitan schools' average of 1042. Additional variability was determined by gender and curriculum. Two schools in the research sample were all boys schools, two schools were all girls schools and three schools were co-educational. One of the sample schools was an alternative curriculum co-educational school. This combination of schools provided a broad variability in the schools within the case.

The steps involved in the process of sourcing recruits is illustrated in Figure 3.2. Principals of the selected schools were contacted by the researcher and the purpose of the research was explained. Principals were provided with a *Principal Information Letter* (Appendix B) and signed a *Principal Consent Form* (Appendix C), consistent with university and CEO Sydney ethics clearances obtained for this research (Appendices D, E and F). The importance of the three factors relevant to the research, namely gender, New Scheme status, and teacher role, were explained. The researcher's interest in maximum variation within each factor was emphasised. The confidentiality of all parties involved in the research was assured. Following consent, principals were asked to utilise their expertise, professional knowledge and

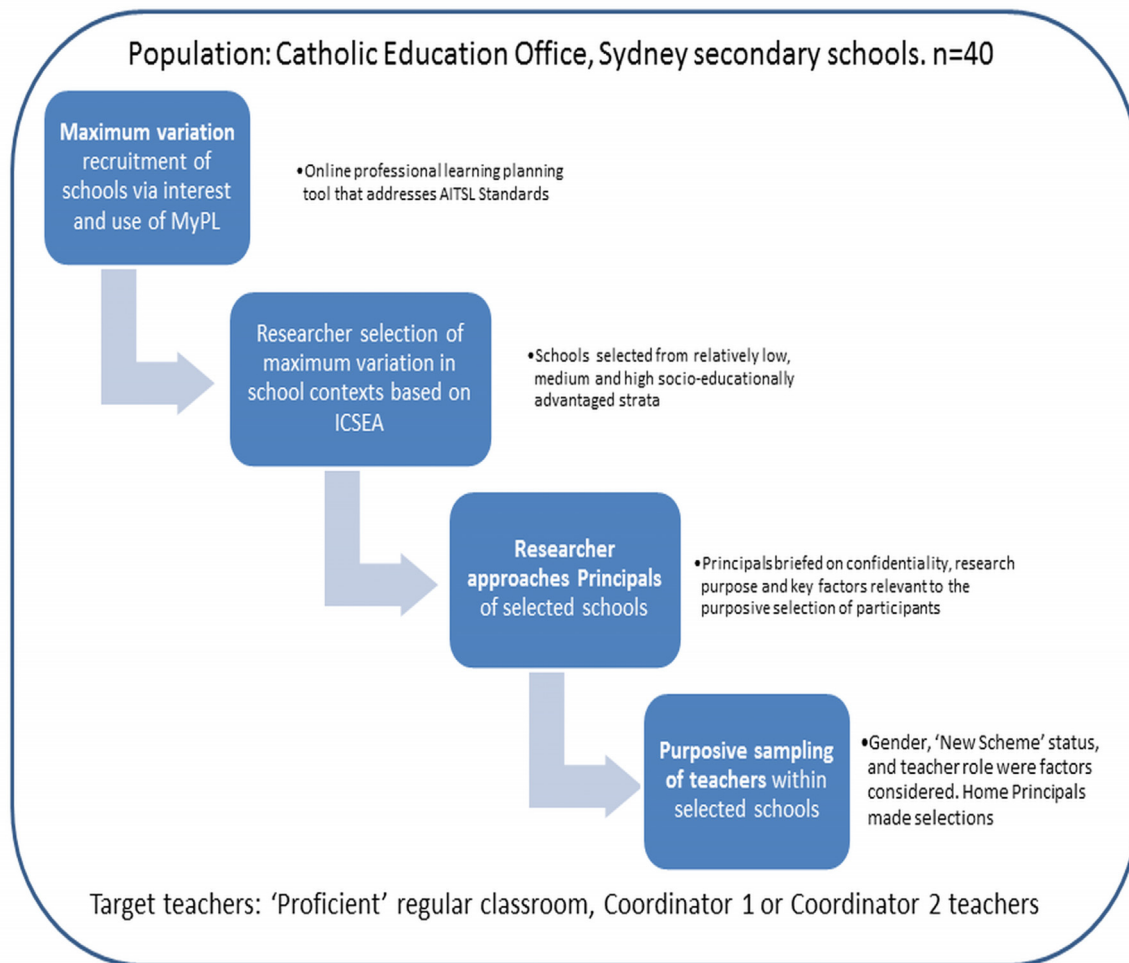
judgement to select a range of teachers. This strategy of participant selection not only ensured an accurate selection of the purposive sample but also placed the researcher one step removed from the selection process. The particulars of the research participants per school subsequently selected is outlined in Table 3.4 below. Full particulars of all research participants can be found in Appendix G.

*Table 3.4: Particulars of research participants*

School Pseudonym	Males	Females	Middle Leaders	Classroom Teachers	New Scheme	Non-New Scheme
St Abigail's	6	6	4	8	8	4
St Baldwin's	5	5	5	5	6	4
St Charity's	2	10	3	9	7	5
St Day's	2	10	9	3	7	7
St Edbert's	5	1	2	4	4	2
St Fabian's	3	8	7	4	3	8
St Gile's	4	4	2	6	5	3

Through a school-based delegate of the principal, each participant was given a copy of the *Participant Information Letter* (Appendix H). Each participant also signed a *Participant Consent Form* (Appendix I). In summary, the strategy of targeting schools utilising *MyPL* ensured that participants were sufficiently familiar with the AITSL Standards and thus were able to offer views useful to the research; the technique of referred approval resulted in a very high acceptance rates for participation (no declines were reported), one step removed from the researcher and potential bias. Procedures for ethical, fully informed participant consent were employed, resulting in a maximally varied sample. In total, 71 participants contributed 49.5 hours of interview data, amounting to over 500 000 transcript words.

# Recruitment Plan



*Figure 3.2: Two stage recruitment plan of participants.*

## 3.3.2. Data gathering strategies

Selection of data is a deliberate process (S. Taylor, 2001b) and the transparency of the selection process aids in giving credibility and validity to research. The purpose of this section is to provide transparency for the data gathering strategies that were selected that support a critical case study utilising phenomenographic methodology.

Unlike other case study approaches, phenomenography focuses on a single data gathering method, semi-structured interviews (Åkerlind, et al., 2005, see Table 3.1, page 68). It does so



based on the epistemological assumption that an understanding of research participants' conceptions are only accessible to the researcher through the discursive accounts of participants themselves (Richardson, 1999). Research assistants were used for this research and the rationale for their use will be explained. The data gathering strategies used are graphically illustrated in Figure 3.3. The sections which follow will elaborate on each of these strategies.

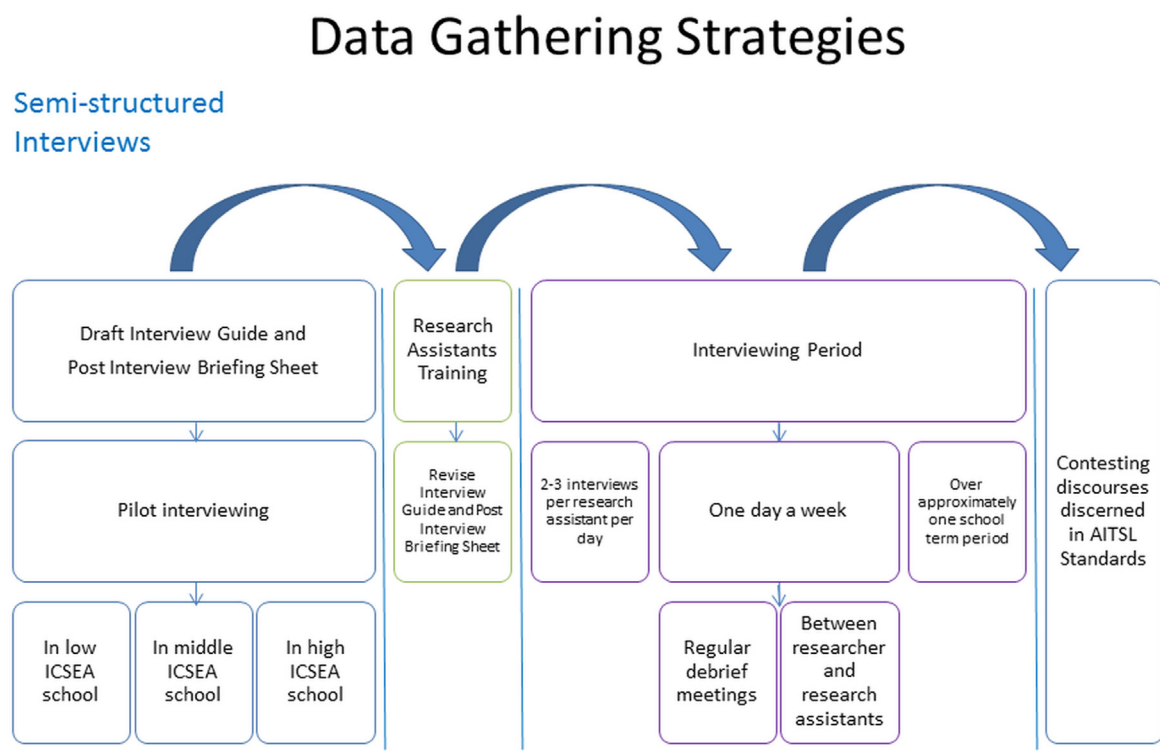


Figure 3.3: Data gathering strategies.

#### 3.3.2.1. *Semi-structured interviews*

As the research question and sub-questions are concerned with teachers' conceptions of professional standards, teachers' voices are seen as a site of discourse formation for the purposes of this research. This documentation of other forms of 'texts' apart from official voices is consistent with the task of the critical researcher to reveal "discourse-subaltern, diasporic, emancipatory, local [and] minority" perspectives and facilitate more complex understandings of phenomena (Luke, 2002, p. 98).

The issue framed by the research question in this study, namely, the impact of professional standards on the teaching profession, suggests the need to gather nuanced and complex views from research participants. Interviews are well established as a key means of data gathering in qualitative research precisely because of their potential to elicit nuance and complexity (Hakim, 2000; Creswell, 2013); they are central to phenomenographic methods which seek to elucidate the finite variety of conceptions regarding a particular phenomenon (Green, 2005). Face-to-face interviews provide the best possible means of gathering qualitative data that might reveal something of the socially constructed lifeworld of the teacher in relation to professional standards (Krauss, 2005). Semi-structured interviews allow exploration of the areas to be covered that correspond to the research purpose and interest, that is, they provide the ‘thick description’ (Stake, 1995) necessary to build a set of categories of description—the finite set of teachers’ conceptions about professional standards—that the phenomenographic approach assumes. Semi-structured interviews also allow for flexibility in the questions asked or prompts made by the interviewer, contingent on the research participant’s comments. Semi-structured interviews are not easier but much harder than other interview types (Wengraf, 2001) and require more skill and experience on the part of the interviewer (Green, 2005; Hakim, 2000; Menter, Elliot, Hulme, & Lewin, 2011). The strategy of utilising highly skilled interviewers/research assistants in the research design is a response to these realities and is explored in more detail in Section 3.3.2.2 (p. 91).

Semi-structured interviews are advised when only a single opportunity will present itself to interview participants (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The demands on schools’ and teachers’ time suggested that data gathering of one-off interviews conducted within approximately one school term was achievable and not overly demanding. In reality the data collection period took place over 11 school weeks spanning Terms 2 and 3 of 2014. A single interview is appropriate to the phenomenographic method and limits unethically excessive intrusion on the life of research participants (Walker, 1983). Engaged for one day a week with two to three interviews per day per interviewer, three interviewers comfortably covered a maximally varied sample within the designated interview period.

An *Interview Guide* (Appendix J) assisted in developing a consistent approach to each interview (Robson, 2011). A companion *Post Interview Briefing Sheet* (Appendix L) ensured that pertinent details were recorded while still fresh in the mind of the interviewer. Interviewers were encouraged to only conduct two to three interviews per day. Time set aside after the interviews provided a reflective opportunity and the briefing sheet acted as a prompt to encourage the interviewer to record those reflections. The *Interview Guide* questions were designed to elicit participant responses that would inform the research questions. For example, participants were asked about their experience of being a teacher, and if that experience had changed them as a person over time. They were also asked about what might be missing from the AITSL Standards. Questions such as this drew out participants' conceptions of the exemplary teacher and informed the research sub-question: How do professional standards impact on the professional that teachers become?

The interview guide was sufficiently instructive to the interviewer that it provided comparable areas of investigation without being so restrictive that it did not allow for the natural flow of a conversation, allowing the research participant to open up. The interview guide served as a "mental framework" for the nature of the data gathered rather than a strict set of questions to be asked in linear fashion (Yin, 2011b, p. 139). The purpose of the guide was also to assist interviewers in exploring in as great a depth as possible the perceptions of research participants regarding the discourses operating around professional standards, reconstruct[ing] their experience and... explor[ing] their meaning" (Seidman, 1998, p. 76). In addition to the interview guide, research assistants training developed the importance of probing and the use of verbal and non-verbal prompts, as opposed to directing questions, as skills of the well-trained interviewer that assist in eliciting rich data from research participants (Leech, 2002; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), skills essential in phenomenographic research (Green, 2005; Walsh, 2000). Research assistants training also raised awareness of the power relationship between research assistants and research participants. Heightened awareness helped to otherwise avoid interview processes which construct and suggest discursive understandings that would have reinforced predetermined understandings of the interviewer (Briggs, 2003).

Details of the research assistants training are contained in Appendix M, which also describes the *Peer Debrief Process* used in this research.

Interviews were planned for approximately one hour duration and in actuality ranged between 15 minutes and 65 minutes, dependent on the openness of the participant. To ensure accuracy of subsequent professional transcription, interviews were digitally voice recorded, generally accepted as an unobtrusive and essential tool in discourse research (J. A. Edwards, 2003; Menter, et al., 2011). Transcriptions were formatted according to the UK Data Archive best practice guidelines (Van den Eynden, Corti, Woollard, Bishop, & Horton, 2011; see also Neale, 2008), in a denaturalised style suited to discourse analysis (Bucholtz, 2000; UK Data Service, 2013; Van den Eynden, et al., 2011). These standards are illustrated in Appendix N, *Transcript Proforma* and Appendix O, *Transcription Guidelines*. Transcription utilised three resources. Firstly, the researcher transcribed some early interviews of each of the research assistants to identify any issues that required further clarification or refinement with them. The remaining digital audio recordings of interviews were transcribed either by an experienced transcriber known to the researcher who also signed a *Research Assistant Commitment to Confidentiality Agreement* (Appendix P) or by utilising a professional research transcription service. A very high degree of consistency was achieved in the standard of the transcriptions between the three sources.

#### 3.3.2.1.1. Pilot interviews

Pilot interviews are considered essential in phenomenographic research (Bowden, 2005; Green, 2005). Two pilot interviews were conducted by the researcher which was deemed sufficient to field test the draft interview guide and other elements of the interview process (Creswell, 2013). The refinements in the interviewing process and interview guide that resulted from the piloting process formed a part of the agenda for the training of research assistants (Appendix M).

### 3.3.2.2. *Use of research assistants*

Qualitative research generally acknowledges that research is influenced by inquirer values (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); indeed it has been argued that researcher subjectivity is integral to critical inquiries (Niesche, 2008). While recent iterations of phenomenographic methodology allow for researcher subjectivity in second phase critical analysis (Collier-Reed & Ingerman, 2013), phenomenography strives, initially, to capture the variety of conceptions of a phenomenon held by research participants, untainted by researcher subjectivity. This requires particular care in the design of research interviews. On this basis, an argument is mounted here for the use of research assistants. This section explores the issues relating to the use of research assistants, justifying their use and identifying validity threats in their engagement and the ways in which those threats were addressed.

The researcher is the designer and implementer of *MyPL* (A. Taylor, 2013), a professional learning tool discussed in Section 3.3.1.2.3 (p. 81), and is also a school principal in relationship with participants' own school principals. Two issues are apparent here. Firstly, there are ethical and validity issues concerning the distorting effects of power and coercion. Secondly, there is the threat of confusion of purpose. Participants may have connected the return of the *MyPL* designer and implementer as a 'program evaluation' of *MyPL* rather than an investigation of their perceptions of professional standards, confusing the purpose of the interview, the interviewer's intent and resulting in muddled and unenlightening data.

In addition to these factors, phenomenographic interviewing seeks to avoid to the greatest degree possible the imposition of the privileged position of the researcher and his or her views about the phenomenon on research participants (Bowden, 2005; Collier-Reed, 2006). The position of the researcher as a school principal alone had the power to contaminate participants' conceptions of professional standards for teachers, as participants rethought or reconceived professional standards vis-à-vis the researcher's relationship to them. The use of appropriately trained research assistants provided the methodological "detachment" required to obviate these methodological issues (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015, p. 133). To the extent that

the interviewer contributed to the social construction of transcripts in research interviews, this was accessible to researcher scrutiny precisely because the researcher was one step removed from the interview process (Säljö, 1997; Yates, Partridge, & Bruce, 2012). For these reasons, three retired and thus depowered secondary school principals were utilised as research assistants to conduct the interviews with research participants.

The use of recently retired and highly experienced school leaders as research assistants was deliberate and purposive. As each research assistant's work as a school leader predated the implementation of the AITSL Standards, they possessed a degree of neutrality that would not be possible to source in current teacher-leaders charged with implementing the AITSL Standards. At the same time, they possessed a vast experience in schools. There were two dimensions of that experience that were germane to the interviewing task. Firstly, they were sufficiently experienced in the political realities of educational discourses that training in the purpose of the research readily resonated with them. Secondly, they were experienced in working with teachers and in interviewing, skills that assisted them in the process of eliciting teachers' perceptions regarding professional standards. Their experience as "ethically engaged human beings" also better equipped them to negotiate the potentially difficult path that an interview situation potentially presents where the participant is, without sufficient empathy, reified as a mere object of research (Plummer, 2001, p. 205); such considerations are important as an understanding of the participant's world is essential to the elicitation of quality interview data (Fontana & Frey, 2008).

Training of research assistants was considered essential (Green, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Research assistants underwent a day-long training with the researcher, assisted by the research supervisor, to orientate them to the purpose of the interviews, the interviewing methods required, and other ethical and technical considerations necessary to ensure the validity of the data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Green, 2005; Robson, 2011). As mentioned in Section 3.3.2.1.1 (p. 90), the details of the training day are contained in Appendix M which describes the *Peer Debrief Process*. The training resulted in the

refinement of the *Interview Guide* (Appendix J) and *Post Interview Briefing Sheet* (Appendix L) which contributed to a consistent approach to each interview necessary for research validity (Robson, 2011).

As also detailed in Appendix M, the *Peer Debrief* process enabled the researcher, assisted by the research supervisor, to meet with the research assistants at regular intervals through the interviewing period to discuss emergent issues and to ensure consistent and valid progress. The way in which the research assistants both gathered data and created data that fed into further analysis is graphically illustrated in Figure 3.4. This process was highly generative and assisted in the modification, adaptation and further development of the propositions of Chapter 6.

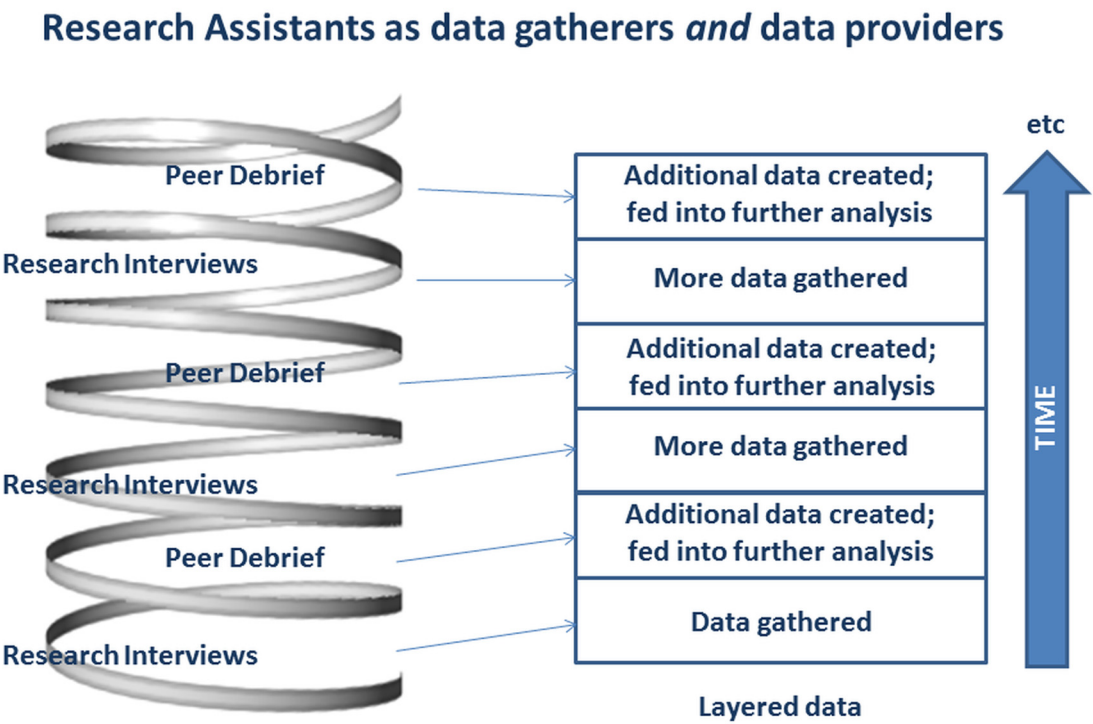


Figure 3.4: Role of research assistants in layered data generation.

Questions of sufficiency and saturation formed one aspect of the debrief meetings between researcher, the research supervisor and the research assistants, and helped to clarify the point

at which further interviewing was not adding apparent value to the study. The research assistants also raised the issue of teacher fabrications in response to accountability regimes such as professional standards (Sweetland & Hoy, 2001). Strategies to deal with this were discussed, namely the importance of eliciting real world stories from participants which revealed their conceptions of teacher professional standards without necessarily focusing on the AITSL Standards directly.

### **3.3.3. Data analysis**

In this section, an overview of how the proposed analysis of data links with data gathering strategies in this study's research design is diagrammatically illustrated in Figure 3.5 and is explained. This research utilises Foucauldian tools to provide insights that guide its second phase critical analysis, and this is dealt with in detail in Chapter 4.

#### **3.3.3.1. *First phase data analysis***

The analysis of data in this research design was in two phases. The first phase was a typical phenomenographic analysis. NVivo (QSR International, 2013) computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was utilised to facilitate the analysis of data. As a means of triangulating findings, some use was also made of a second CAQDAS, Leximancer (A. E. Smith, 2011). CAQDAS is well suited to the undertaking of phenomenographic analysis (Penn-Edwards, 2010; R. Thompson, 2002). Phenomenographic analysis involved a process of initially coding themes (referred to as 'nodes' in NVivo) evident in the interview transcripts, followed by the sorting of these nodes into a set of categories of descriptions of the phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2005). The final mapping stage involved the identification of the relationships which exist between the various categories of description to produce a set of related conceptions of the AITSL Standards. These relationships are known in phenomenography as the 'outcome space' (Åkerlind, 2012) and will be discussed in Section 5.9 (p. 156). Establishment of the outcome space in this research addresses the first research sub-question: What are the conceptions of the AITSL Standards held by teachers?



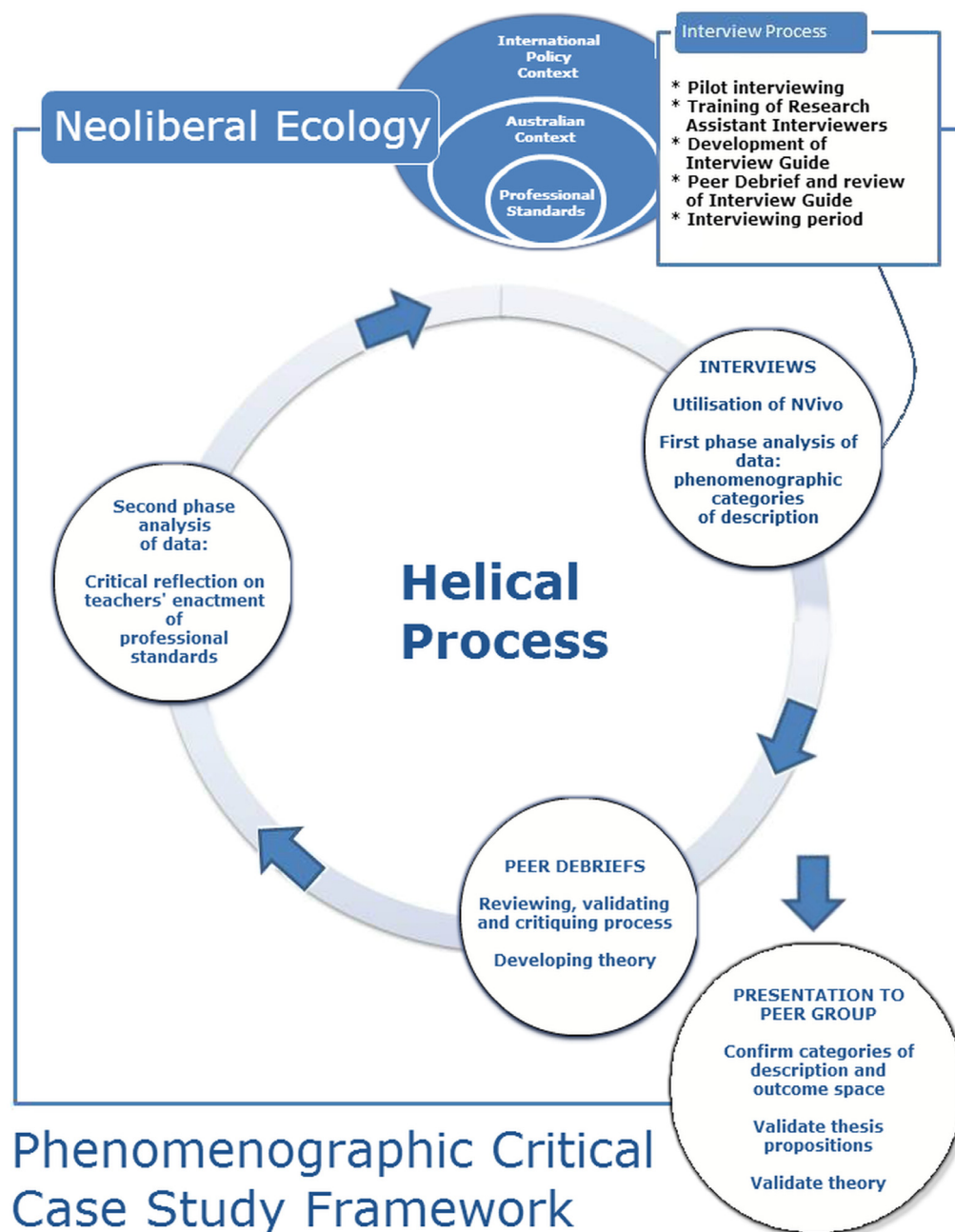


Figure 3.5: Overview of analysis within the research design.

Participant interviews totalling 49.5 hours, more than 500 000 words, were coded in the first round of NVivo coding. In addition to this data, 15 hours, 84 000 words of transcribed data from the *Peer Debrief* sessions (Appendix M) were also coded. This processes operationalised methodological reflexivity. The first round of data coding produced just over 3500 coded references in 171 separate nodes. In accordance with the helical process of review and refinement of the data, as graphically illustrated in Figure 3.5 and described in Appendix M,

iterative oncoding of data eventually distilled the data down into eight parent nodes. These parent nodes represented the starting point for the categories of description outlined in Chapter 5. In addition to the use of NVivo (QSR International, 2013), Leximancer (A. E. Smith, 2011) was used to assist in the discernment of the phenomenographic outcome space. A full description of the outcome space can be found in Section 5.9 (p. 154).

### **3.3.3.2. *Second phase data analysis***

In its original form, the ultimate research outcome of phenomenography was in the categorisation of the finite number of ways in which research participants conceived of a phenomenon (Marton, 1986). The mapping and identification of the outcome space in Chapter 5 achieves this initial aim of phenomenography. The outcomes space provides the frame which thereafter allows for the second phase analysis in Chapter 6. Second phase, critical analysis of the outcome space is a more recent development in phenomenographic research (Collier-Reed & Ingerman, 2013). Critical analysis, it has been proposed, is essential in new, postmodern times where policy directions have outstripped old research intentions and questions (Ball, 2012; Kenway, Bigum, Fitzclarence, Collier, & Tregenza, 2007). The use of the Foucauldian toolbox (Section 4.1, p. 109) is the particular critical lens that has been selected to undertake this task. Prior to examining the Foucauldian toolbox in detail in Chapter 4, section makes a case for why the Foucauldian toolbox is well suited to the research sub-questions.

Clarity regarding the variety of teachers' conceptions about professional standards and the logical relationships between those conceptions—the outcome space—allows for a secondary critical reflection by the researcher which addressed the second and third research sub-questions, namely: What are the conceptions of the AITSL Standards held by teachers? and How do teachers negotiate the contesting discourses operating within professional standards? Analysis of the outcome space derived from the first phase analysis utilised the Foucauldian toolbox (Section 4.1, p. 109) in an attempt to understand these questions. An outcome space is well suited to analysis utilising Foucauldian tools, as it has created in microcosm what

Foucault sought, in part, to do in his work: “To locate sets of relationship clusters from isolated elements” (Foucault, 2013, p. 42). The Foucauldian archive provides a set of intellectual tools to revisit practice, ask questions about power, knowledge and freedom, and the formation of the subject. These questions are consistent with the research sub-questions enumerated here and also with the ontological assumption noted in Section 3.1.4 (p. 70) and repeated here, that “there is no individual, no self, that is ontologically prior to power” (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 87). Foregrounding this ontological assumption also further justifies the use of research assistants and is further explored in Section 4.1.2.3 (p. 116). Critical analysis utilising Foucauldian tools offers the promise of the discovery of new knowledge regarding the phenomenographic relationship between subject-teacher and object-teacher professional standards. The tools utilised in the second phase data analysis are fully expounded and form the subject matter of Chapter 4.

### 3.3.4. Validations

While the term ‘verification’ retains currency in qualitative research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013), some qualitative researchers prefer to use the term ‘validation’ rather than verification because of the latter term’s close association with the quantitative research tradition (Creswell, 2013; Hakim, 2000). The Frankfurt school preferred “the postulate of the ‘capacity for confirmation’” (Adorno, et al., 1976, p. 27), capturing the nuanced approach of non-positivist research which nonetheless strives for academic rigour, verisimilitude and warrantability. The American Educational Research Association’s (AERA) document on standards for reporting on Humanities (AERA, 2009) offers the term *warrant* as synonymous with the older concept of research credibility popularised by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The term *warrant* has gained currency in social science research and encompasses a range of procedures which contribute to the strength of an argument being made for the veracity and rigour of research findings (Denzin, 2011; Gorard, 2013; Robson, 2011). This section, then, will discuss the key issues to be considered in ensuring the warrantability of the research as well as discussing strategies for research transparency and trustworthiness.

A final caveat needs to be offered in this introduction to the current research's validations: Phenomenographic research has a commitment to discovering the relationship of the research subject and the phenomenon in question. This commitment has the practical implications of rejecting member checking or follow-up interviews, as these practices threaten to taint the relationality of the subject and phenomenon with the conceptions of the researcher, obscuring the focus of the research (Bowden, 2005; Green, 2005). The rejection of these common strategies for trustworthiness highlights the need for alternative means of ensuring rigour in phenomenographic research. Given the strength of the literature endorsing member checking as a key validation strategy (Ary, et al., 2010; Creswell, 2013; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Merriam, 2002; Robson, 2011; Stake, 1995), the purposive decision not to include member checking will also be addressed.

#### **3.3.4.1. *Warrantability***

The key procedures to strengthen warrantability in this research are transferability and the reflexivity gained through peer debriefing. The connection between (a) research transferability and research generalisability and (b) peer debriefing and theory triangulation will be discussed. Finally, strategies for capturing research assistants' reflections on their encounters with participants will also be considered.

#### **3.3.4.2. *Transferability and generalisability***

Generalisability remains a concern in modern projections of qualitative research validity (AERA, 2006). Generalisability, in the qualitative research domain, refers to the degree to which the findings of research are transferable to other similar contexts (Ary, et al., 2010). Qualitative research does not provide context free findings that are universally applicable, as is the stated aim of positivistic research; indeed, deep reflection on the contextuality of the research subject is a hallmark of qualitative research into the professional lives of teachers (Mockler, 2011). Qualitative research can, however, offer credible findings well justified within a particular context which can provide learnings for and applicability to similar contexts (Ary, et al., 2010; Ercikan & Roth, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Roller, 2013).

Several factors in the current research contribute to transferability. Firstly, teachers within the study operate within a high performing school system. As such, they present, in relation to professional standards, the *possibilities* for professional standards in a strongly conducive professional environment. This is potentially high-value knowledge for the teaching profession in Australia and internationally. Secondly, transferability of the research is aided by the use of thick description (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013), generated from the substantial database collected through the data collection phase of the research. Thirdly, phenomenographic methodology seeks to develop categories of description, drawn from but beyond individual voices. These categories of description are a part of a finite set of possible conceptions of a phenomenon that are “stable and generalisable between situations” (Marton, 1981).

#### 3.3.4.3. *Transparency*

In addition to a defensible design, in order to have a capacity for confirmation the current research requires transparency. Together, quality research design and transparency contribute to the research findings’ rigour, confirmability and trustworthiness, consistent with current global standards of transparency and warrantability for social science research (AERA, 2006). A key means of establishing research transparency is the establishment of an audit trail (Krathwohl, 2004; O’Donoghue, 2007; Robson, 2011) which allows interested parties to trace the accumulation of data for the research and the decisions made regarding its use in analysis. The audit trail for this research took the form of a journal, associated memos and nodes developed and maintained within NVivo, a tool suited to the task (Johnston, 2006; Siccama & Penna, 2008). The audit trail allowed for tracking of research assistants training, the development of the *Interview Guide* (Appendix J), the selection of research participants, interviews completed and, significantly, the substance of the meetings between the researcher, research supervisor and research assistants responsible for interviewing participants. Documenting each of these elements of the research process contribute to the research’s trustworthiness (Ary, et al., 2010; Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Documentation in the audit trail included artefacts of research events, such as memos, timetables, agendas and audio

recording of regular meetings between the researcher, research supervisor and research assistants before, during and after the interview period.

#### **3.3.4.4. *Peer debriefing***

Regular meetings between the researcher and the research assistants before, during, and after the interview phase, known generally as peer debriefing (Robson, 2011), were an important means of deepening warrantability. Details of the peer debriefing process are contained in Appendix M. The inclusion of the research supervisor in these meetings at several points along the research timeline, to reflect on emerging themes and to act as a ‘devil’s advocate’, aided research warrantability. The devil’s advocate has the role of asking “hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251) and is widely advocated as an aspect of research rigour in phenomenographic research (Bowden & Green, 2005). This strategy to depth the research findings’ warrantability contains elements of theory triangulation as conceived by Stake (1995); that is, the participatory and collaborative research inherent in peer debriefings contributed to the reliability of the resultant research analysis.

#### **3.3.4.5. *Member checking***

Member checking is a practice of returning to research participants subsequent to initial interviewing to seek further feedback from them or to verify the integrity of the interpretation of the interview (Ary, et al., 2010). There are significant issues with member checking, however, that make its use inappropriate in the current research. Given the widespread use of member checking in qualitative research as a means of validation (Creswell, 2013), it is important that these objections to member checking are enumerated to justify its non-use.

Firstly, the need for member checking has been superseded by technological advancements. Member checking, as a concept, was developed in 1985 by Lincoln and Guba (cited in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Since that time, significant advances in the quality of digital voice recording possible during interviews eliminates the argument for a need to check the accuracy of what was actually said during the interview (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001).

Indeed, it is noted in the literature that member checking is most useful for “collecting more data rather than verifying that an interpretation is true” (St. Pierre, 2002, p. 413). All interviews and peer debriefs in this research were audio recorded using modern digital recording devices, with a backup digital recording device also utilised. Interview audio was synchronised with interview transcriptions in NVivo, making the checking of nuanced expression and potentially ambiguous statements straightforward.

Secondly, member checking can waste people’s time. L. Harvey (2014) corroborates the reflection of other researchers when he writes:

My previous experience of member-checking had always been that participants would respond to any texts I sent them, if they responded at all, with broad agreement with everything I had said. One or two very conscientious ones might make a few corrections, perhaps if they had made some kind of performance slip in the interview, but it was never a process that generated any deeper opinion or reflection.  
(p. 26)

Given the demands on teachers’ time already noted in Section 3.3.2.1 (p. 88), member checking to gather additional data could well be considered an inappropriate use of teacher time (A. Davies, 2005).

Thirdly, member checking can be inappropriate to phenomenographic research as individual voices are not evident in findings which are, instead, “categories of description, supported by excerpts [that] go across individuals” (Green, 2005, p. 44). Individual participants are not in a position to validate categories of description because they do not ethically have access to the full data set (Trigwell, 2000, p. 81).

Fourthly, member checking has the potential to change the data and this is precisely what the research seeks to avoid. Member checking is essentially a strategy for quality control. Any method of quality control must be consistent with “the philosophical stance, the research goals and the research tradition employed” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 478). Given the stance

and the purpose of this research, a return to the research participants “involves an implicit return to truth claims” (S. Taylor, 2001a, p. 322). When the ‘truth’ that is being sought in analysis is that which lies beneath the surface of conversational dialogue, then the initial interview and the notes made on it by the interviewer constitute research data, the integrity of which risks being invalidated by member checking; there is a clear distinction between data collection and data analysis and there is a risk that member checking, especially in the case of the current research design, could intrude on the data analysis.

There may be reasons of simple courtesy and respect for research participants to return to them something of the research in which they have participated. Rather than through member checking, this has been achieved through the offer for the researcher to make a brief presentation to participating school teaching staffs on some of the directions and implications of the research that emerged from an analysis of the interview data (Appendix H).

#### **3.3.4.6. *Researcher reflexivity and interpretive awareness***

Reliability is expected as a first step towards case study validity (Yin, 2009). A perspective on reliability that Yin proposes is reliability-as-reproducibility. This perspective might have led to an obsession to produce a research design that allowed any other researcher to be able to replicate the discovery process of the outcome space; that is, could somebody else, using the same methodologies, have found exactly the same data or coded it or interpreted it in exactly the same way as it has been here? An alternative perspective on reliability is reliability-as-interpretive-awareness (Sandberg, 1997). Interpretive awareness demands that the researcher seeks intersubjective agreement with others; that is, to ask the question and be satisfied with the answer: Can you see what I see? Intersubjective agreement between co-researchers is a strong measure of reliability within phenomenographic research approaches (Bowden, 2005) and further justifies the use of peer group meetings used in this research to reach agreement about the outcome space (Åkerlind, 2012). The peer group dynamic of the researcher engaged in dialogue with research assistants and research supervisor created a “surplus of seeing” that contributed significantly to researcher reflexivity (Midgley, 2011, p. 43). These points



highlight the importance of reflexivity as a significant methodological tool to help the researcher escape the structuralist bind of being a captive of a cultural milieu from which he or she offers his or her limited interpretation of the world.

In the context of a neoliberal ecology portrayed in this research, reflexivity is also an antidote to technical rationality (Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2006; Go, 2012). Reflexivity is meant here as more than *thinking about* an issue—it is deconstructing one’s frame of reference to challenge assumptions (Derrida, 1986; Webster-Wright, 2006). It is all the more necessary because of the current researcher’s professional closeness to the object of study—the AITSL Standards (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). The use of Foucauldian conceptual tools (Chapter 4) is thus an exercise in applying reflexivity to research. Reflexivity assisted the researcher to attempt to move to the boundary of the socially constructed world under investigation to understand the phenomenon in question (Mezirow, 1996). There are serious questions about the degree to which this can be achieved (Ball, 2013; Stronach, 2010), but at the very least, the researcher can move to the boundary, as Foucault wrote, “to make an effort—for one cannot simply leap outside that discourse—to situate myself at its borders and to move continuously from the inside to the outside” (quoted in Margolis, 1993, p. 54). By standing at the border of one’s frame of reference, one can gain a larger perspective of what is in it, but also see the possibilities beyond it (Hendricks, 2008).

The engagement of research assistants in this research is a serious attempt to reflexively ‘move to the boundary’ avoiding being immersed in the cloud of dialogue with research participants. Even the nature of the research assistants—recently retired, highly respected but ‘depowered’ secondary school principals who left school leadership before the professional standards for teachers debate had gained any momentum in Australian schools—is intentional, as they are also individuals who themselves, given their position, view the phenomenon of professional standards for teachers from somewhere close to the boundary. This strategy has not avoided contingency altogether, as interviews, even when audio recorded and transcribed at a distance are still “products of the contingencies of the interview situation” (Robson, 2011,

p. 279) and necessarily reflect the dynamics of that situation in all its complex and perhaps unknowable forms. *Post Interview Briefing Sheets* (Appendix L), already discussed, as well as the reflection on this material in peer debriefing, served as validating mechanisms in the study, mitigating against these effects. As noted in Section 3.3.2.2 (p. 91) and Section 3.3.4.4 (p. 100), the peer debriefing process was highly generative, creating a strong interpretive awareness and validation point for the project.

### **3.4. ETHICAL ISSUES**

Informed consent and the confidentiality of research participants is considered essential to any ethically valid research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Informed consent was addressed through formal letters to research participants outlining the nature of the research in which they had been invited to participate, and their ability to withdraw from participation at any point in the research process (Appendix I). Confidentiality was honoured through the use of pseudonyms for participants and for schools in the reporting of research findings. Security of data was ensured by storing data in a secure, locked physical location, with digital data stored in password-protected digitally secure locations. The need to maintain confidentiality also extended to the research assistants. Accordingly, research assistants signed confidentiality agreements as a part of their initial training (Appendix P).

Malone (2003) makes observations about the problematic nature of informed consent 'at home', that is to say, in one's own workplace or closely related workplaces. One issue is the possibility, in a relatively limited workforce, that a participant's identity is easily disclosed from transcript excerpts. The CEO Sydney system of schools in which the research was conducted employs around 7000 teachers, of whom 71 were selected as research participants. Nonetheless, the potential existed for teachers to become aware that research interviews were being conducted in their school and this increased the risk of identification. To this end, the use of retired principals as research assistants rather than the researcher, a principal in the system of schools, considerably reduced the risks of participant identification. It also addressed issues of power and coercion that would be raised in the direct conduct of

interviews by an insider principal researcher. These factors further justified the use of research assistants in this research. In addition to these factors, phenomenographic methodology aggregates the data of individual participants into categories of description, reducing the threat of individual participant identification.

Gender can sometimes be perceived as a constraint on the interview process (Gillham, 2005; Menter, et al., 2011) as can the known interests of the researcher and their relative power in the interview situation (S. Taylor, 2001b). The research assistants for the current research were all male—this was a vagary of who was available and suitable to take on the role. Other factors, however, mitigated; the experience of the research assistants as former principals, their reduced status as retired persons and as research assistants rather than core researcher, and the fact that teaching at secondary school level is a mixed gender profession, all served to minimise the risks to the research from these factors.

Another ethical issue that can sometimes arise in interviews is trauma of the participant caused by the surfacing of unpleasant memories or topics, for example, discussion about sexual abuse (Weiss, 1994). It was anticipated that the research question of the current research and the subject matter of interviews would not lead to the discussion of traumatic issues and this proved to be the reality. This minimised harm to participants was mirrored by a potential beneficence; it could be argued that participants benefited from the professional conversation which helped to develop their thinking about professional standards for teachers (Danaher, Baguley, & Midgley, 2013); this was indeed reported to interviewers by some participants.

The use of Foucauldian conceptual tools (Chapter 4) has a particular intention in the way it seeks to examine data, not accepting the face value of what is explained as the only explanation worthy of consideration. This raised questions about respecting the interviewee's point of view (Higgs & Cherry, 2009; Krauss, 2005) which needed to be considered in the dialectic element of the interview design, initially developed in the pilot interviews and

further refined in the research assistants training sessions prior to initial interviews. Rudman (2013), for example, utilised a Foucauldian perspective to aid the self-reflexivity required of the principal-researcher. He rightly respected the perspectives of research participants by recognising the “threads of power” that run “network-like” through schools and their relationships (p. 190). A school principal-researcher’s reflexive awareness includes an awareness of being intimately implicated in the discourses under investigation (Parr, 2010; Stronach, 2010). It could be argued that the critical researcher appreciates more keenly, and is more aware of than most, the coercive force of the threads of power in research, including its design.

### **3.5. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS**

The focus of the research on a purposive sample within a single system of schools is necessarily a limitation to this study. Nonetheless, the selection of a high performing school system holds the promise of the *possibilities* for professional standards for teachers; this is a key element of the generalisability and transferability of the study’s findings and usefulness. Strategies to mitigate threats to the warrantability of the study and thus its future usefulness have been considered in the construction of the research design.

Some might propose that a full exploration of teachers’ relationship to professional standards requires a critical ethnography and long immersion in the field (Ball, 1994; Foley & Valenzuela, 2005), which is beyond the scope of this study. In response, the contention of this research is that the variety of teachers’ conceptions regarding professional standards can adequately be mapped with a small sample through the use of phenomenographic methodology.

### **3.6. UNANTICIPATED DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COURSE OF THE RESEARCH**

Subsequent to the data collection period of this research, the *NSW Enterprise Agreement for Catholic Schools* (CEO/IEU, 2015) was concluded, linking teachers’ pay scales to the AITSL Standards. To date, NSW is the only Australian state to link pay scales to professional

standards (Piccoli, 2015). An industrial campaign and trade union ballot to determine whether or not teachers would take strike action in relation to the Enterprise Agreement took place on 7 July 2014 in the course of the data collection period. Sixty-seven percent of Sydney Catholic secondary school union members took part in the legally mandated protected industrial action ballot with the Australian Electoral Commission. Of the union members who voted, 95% voted in favour of strike action (AEC, 2014). Forty-nine of the interviews for this research were completed prior to the ballot; 22 interviews were completed after the ballot. The number of interviews before and after the actual strike action of 22 July 2014 was 52 and 19 respectively. Further details exploring data collected before and after the Enterprise Agreement ballot and strike can be found in Appendix Q. The possible contaminating effect of the ballot and subsequent strike action was discussed at the peer debriefing sessions and ultimately considered to be of little consequential effect. In fact, negotiations around the Enterprise Agreement appear to have heightened awareness of professional standards. The heightened awareness facilitated greater than might otherwise have been expected teacher reflection on professional standards. These circumstances aided this research's purpose, to explore classroom teachers' perceptions of the meaning, purpose and impact of teacher professional standards and where professional standards find their place in teaching.

The application of the methodology presented in this chapter is sufficient to determine the findings that are offered to the reader as the substance of Chapter 5. Before going on to present those findings, however, it is necessary to outline and explain the critical tools which inform the second phase analysis of the study and which will largely be utilised in Chapter 6. Accordingly, a review of the critical tools relevant to this study's second phase analysis will be the subject of the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER 4: CRITICAL TOOLS

This chapter is designed to explicate how a small portion of the critical tools offered in the work of Michel Foucault informs the research approach and analysis in this thesis. The purpose of the chapter is to detail the theoretical background to the second phase data analysis that was introduced in Section 3.3.3.2 (p. 96) and to build a conceptual understanding of how Foucauldian tools can assist in ultimately responding to the research questions. The first section of this chapter outlines what is meant by ‘tools’ in the application of Foucault’s various critical-theoretical propositions to the current work. It will also justify the use of Foucault’s work in an ad hoc, rather than systematic manner. The subsequent sub-sections will, in turn, relate a number of Foucauldian tools that both inform the overall theoretical stance of this thesis and more particularly, have direct relevance to its second phase analysis. An argument is mounted that while Foucault’s concept of governmentality (Foucault, 1991a; 2010) is widely used in critical studies of education, the lesser utilised tools of pastoral power (Foucault, 2009) and care of the self (Foucault, 1986; 1987) offer greater potential for insight and new knowledge in this study.

### 4.1. THE FOUCAULDIAN TOOLBOX

Foucault is widely cited and utilised by a large variety of critical scholars, not least of all in contemporary educational research (Ball, 2013; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Olssen, 2014; Simons, Olssen, & Peters, 2009). Foucault’s work continues to be translated into English, providing English language scholarship with an ongoing wellspring of material which has yet to be fully tapped, most particularly the recently published lecture series from the Collège de France in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Foucault, 2009; 2010; 2011; 2014). His subject matter was enormously varied, frequently obscure, largely focused on events centuries old, and often provocative, but his abiding interest was in understanding our present situation and ultimately, in his last major work (Foucault, 1986), how to live well through care of the self. Foucault asked a series of non-systematic questions. Irrespective of the subject matter though, and with few exceptions, he strove to articulate “the overlapping constellations of forms and

technologies through which societies constitute themselves through the production of distinctive subjects” (Binkley, 2009, p. xii).

Foucault did not offer an overarching theory (Gutting, 2005b) and rejected the notion that he was any sort of “intellectual prophet” (Foucault, 1996g, p. 424). Rather, his work sought to expose the “systems of thought” (Foucault, 1996g, p. 424) which otherwise remain hidden in plain sight—so enmeshed are we in their power—so that others might use this knowledge to “modify institution and practices” (Foucault, 1996g, p. 425). The usefulness of Foucault’s work derives from the fact that, while his writing is ostensibly about specific subject matter, he disconcerts the logic of the taken-for-granted, helping others thereafter to problematise issues that are related not by subject matter but by similar “technologies of power” (Foucault, 2000a, p. 300). Foucauldian critical reflexivity opens up new ways of understanding our present situation with respect to ever more diverse phenomenon, of which professional standards are one example. Foucauldian critique involves exploring further the discourses that are contesting the intersubjective space between professional standards and the teachers upon whom those standards are imposed. The point to be made here is that Foucauldian tools unsettle taken-for-granted realities. The data gathered from research participants, overall, gave the strong impression that something was not quite right with the way in which professional standards were being imposed on their professional lives. Foucauldian tools provide the discomfiting perspectives that helps us to understand why.

In approaches that parallel what is being attempted in this study, some contemporary works in educational research have utilised Foucault’s work as a conceptual toolkit to frame their research design and to provide critical guidance and insight in the analysis of thick data derived from semi-structured interviews (Ball, et al., 2012; Bourke, 2011; Middleton, 2003; Niesche, 2011; Sipos Zackrisson & Assarsson, 2008). Each of these studies borrows ideas, concepts and insights from the Foucauldian toolkit to the degree that they help to make sense of the data, in other words, to aid in, or indeed change, our understanding of the present situation. Foucault encouraged this use of his work (O’Farrell, 2005); as he put it: “If one or



two of these ‘gadgets’ of approach or method that I’ve tried to employ with psychiatry, the penal system or natural history can be of service to you, then I shall be delighted” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 65).

Foucault sees his own work not as a unified theory but rather as taking place “between unfinished abutments and anticipatory strings of dots” as “philosophical fragments put to work in a historical field of problems” (Foucault, 1991c, pp. 74–75). His analyses of the way in which power relationships worked, for example, were determined by the contingencies of the particular contexts of his inquiries (Koopman, 2013). Foucault described himself as “more an experimenter than a theorist” (Foucault, 1991d, p. 27). Accordingly, Ball (2013) notes that there is no single correct reading of Foucault when applied to a research problem. Knowledge, Foucault wrote, “is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting” (Foucault, 1984a, p. 88). Coherence with Foucault’s perspective can be seen in phenomenography’s process of cutting transcript data in ways which deliberately decontextualise it (Section 3.2.2, p. 74 and Section 3.3.3.1, p. 94).

This study will make use of the Foucauldian toolkit notions of genealogy (Foucault, 1995), pastoral power (Foucault, 2009), care of the self (Foucault, 1986; 1987), problematisation (Foucault, 1988c) and normalisation (Foucault, 1995). Each of these will be considered in turn in the following sections.

#### **4.1.1. Genealogy**

Offering a high degree of commensurability with this study’s first phase phenomenographic analysis, Foucauldian genealogy focuses on the categories of experiences mediated through contesting discourses, each of which is engaged in a struggle to dominate the lifeworld (Foucault, 1980a), in the present case, the lifeworld of the teacher. It seeks to reveal the underlying nature of socially defining power and knowledge relationships

Genealogy was the approach to research that Foucault utilised in *Discipline and Punish*, his analysis of the rise of modern Western prisons (Foucault, 1995). While the text ostensibly

analyses the penal system, it is not blind to education, mentioning schools and education 134 times. Foucault notes that secondary education was one of the first institutions in which the docility of the body—“subjected and practiced bodies”—was effected using disciplinary techniques (Foucault, 1995, p. 138). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes genealogy as an analytical exposition of how the phenomenon under investigation, in this case the power to punish, from which it “derives its bases, justifications and rules, from which it extends its effects and by which it masks its exorbitant singularity” (Foucault, 1995, p. 23). Foucault offers several general rules for his genealogy of the penal system, which include viewing punishment as a “political tactic” and a “technology of power” (Foucault, 1995, p. 23).

Genealogy queries the taken-for-granted: “Genealogy asks the prior question of how the problems that are supposedly to be solved come to be perceived as problems in the first place” (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994, p. 163). It does this by being “patiently documentary” (Foucault, 1998, p. 369). Appreciating this point provides a strong rationale for this thesis taking the time to outline the global genesis of professional standards (Section 1.2, p. 4) and the neoliberal ecology of that genesis (Section 2.4, p. 39). Genealogy, therefore, aids in the problematisation of professional standards. More will be said of problematisation in Section 4.1.4 (p.119). Genealogy also looks for silences and absences (Carabine, 2001, p. 267). Appreciating this point provides the rationale for asking research participants what was missing from the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Standards, a question listed in the *Interview Guide* (Appendix J).

Foucault also said this of genealogy:

What it really does is to entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects. (Foucault, 1980c, p. 83)

It is the appeal to this understanding of genealogy which encourages this thesis to privilege the

voice of teachers in their perspectives, looking for the discontinuities between teachers' views about teacher quality and the normative view of teacher quality that inheres professional standards documents (Gale, 2007). Translated to the current research context, genealogy takes seriously the voice of the teacher seeking to understand the dynamics of professional standards for teachers. An exegesis of the struggle between discourses to become the dominant power/knowledge is how genealogy guides the second phase analysis of this study (Section 3.3.3.2, p. 96). Genealogy and the discomfiting perspectives that it encourages is itself an intellectual toolkit that will assist in making sense of how and why teachers conceptions of professional standards operate as they do in the outcome space that is constructed in Chapter 5.

#### **4.1.2. Power**

Foucault (1987) views power as a non-pejorative term for the strategic and most frequently unequal and unbalanced relation between free subjects. Power is not meant in the usual sense of domination over others, but rather as a primary ontological reality which is experienced when one's conduct is influenced by another (Foucault, 1978; 1987; 1988a; 1988c; O'Leary, 2002). The ubiquitous nature of power "through which we constitute ourselves" (Foucault, 1984b, p. 351) means that, at least potentially, "everything is dangerous" (Foucault, 1984b, p. 343). Teachers frequently experience unbalanced relations of power; they are a "common species" (Palmer, 2007, p. 3), paid from the common purse and thus perceived to be subjects to be formed by politicians' policy settings. The implementation of professional standards exercises power when it influences the conduct of teachers in word or deed. One of the reciprocal powers that teachers have with respect to professional standards is to question their rationality (Foucault, 2000a). Foucault also identifies a relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1995). Knowledge, at times, works in the service of power, through its "extraction, appropriation, distribution, or restraint" (Foucault, 1997a, p. 17) and at other times power serves knowledge by its exclusions, rejections, prohibitions, promotions and systems of validation (Foucault, 1977; 1997a; 2013).

#### 4.1.2.1. *Power through discourse*

Paraphrasing Fischer (2009), power relations are always produced in connection with discourse. A discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, can be said to exist when a set of rules can be discerned that cover all of the objects, operations, concepts and options of a field (Foucault, 1991b). Discourses involve “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 2002, p. 54). In addition, every discourse, “contains the power to say something other than what it actually says, and thus to embrace a plurality of meanings” (Foucault, 2002, p. 134). A constant refrain in Foucault’s work is seeking to understand the ways in which power operates within the discourses that direct the institutions of society and the actions of citizens (Fischer, 2009; Foucault, 2002; Margolis, 1993; Rouse, 2005; Scheurich & McKenzie, 2008). The privileging of one discourse suppresses others. The Foucauldian concept of power operating discursively, however, should not be understood crudely as an attempt at domination by the government or its agencies or anyone else specifically—it has its “own specificity or independent standing” (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2008, p. 332). Discourses have a life of their own that run in parallel with a shifting matrix of ideologies within the wider society. The matrix of ideologies that have been identified already to this point in the study are those which come under the umbrella of neoliberalism (Section 2.4, p. 39). That is to say, as a basic premise underpinning this thesis, professional standards for teachers in general and the AITSL Standards in particular are to be understood as a function of the neoliberal turn in the global metropole.

The secondary analysis in this study seeks to understand how particular discourses operating within the context of professional standards have acquired their status of scientificity (Foucault, 1996a), legitimising some practices and delegitimising others (Foucault, 1980a; 1995; 2002; Ball, 2013; Gordon, 2000). After Foucault (2002), this will involve asking *analytical* questions *in the service of* this work’s specific research questions. Those analytical questions are: What is able to be said/not said within the context of a particular discourse? What are the underlying relationships of knowledge, power and dependency operating within discourses identified in the analysis? and How do the perceptions and actions of teachers in

relation to professional standards exert their own power in relation to the implementation of professional standards? Each of these inquiries is possible within the context of the research questions framed for this study.

#### **4.1.2.2. *Pastoral power***

Foucault held a Chair at the Collège de France and this position required him to deliver an annual lecture series to report on his current research. This material continues to be translated into English, making further Foucauldian insights available to English-speaking scholarship. In his 1978 series, Foucault notes a particular form of power over the individual which he calls “pastoral power,” with its roots in the self-conduct and influence over conduct in Christian and pre-Christian history (Foucault, 2009, p. 123). In lectures at the Collège de France as well as at Stanford the following year, he outlines the way in which pastoral power focuses on the individual through the power of personal confession to impose a self-sustaining discipline (Foucault, 2014), as well as through the utilisation of “self-examination and the guidance of conscience” (Foucault, 2000a). Governmentality, Foucault reasons, emerged from pastoral power, utilising “apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument” (Foucault, 2009, p. 108). In a later piece written in 1982, Foucault provides a corrective that does not place pastoral power as prior to and superseded by governmentality, but rather situates pastoral power as the particular form of power that is oriented to the subjugation of the individual, rather than a particular group, class or the population in general (Foucault, 2000c). It is contended here that the strong sense of personal commitment that imbues teachers and teaching and writing about it (Day, 2004) makes pastoral power a more useful lens or gadget or tool for this thesis than the more typical appeal to the concept of governmentality, the latter concept nonetheless having been much more widely utilised in studies on education (Ball, 2013; Bansel, 2015; Bye, 2015; Donzelot & Gordon, 2008; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Maguire, 2014; Meredyth, 1998; Niesche, 2013; Olssen, 1999; 2014; Peters & Besley, 2007; Pongratz, 2006; Sobe, 2012; Stickney, 2012; Webb, 2011). The concept of governmentality also informs the scholarship which is cited in Section 2.4 (p. 39) and Section 2.5 (p. 43). Pastoral power finds ready root in teaching (Olssen, 2008), with teachers who, as

carers of children, resonate with pastoral power's appeal to "zeal, devotion and endless application" (Foucault, 2009, p. 127). The analytical tool of pastoral power will assist in addressing the research question and sub-questions, prompting reflection on the possible ways in which professional standards (a) self-discipline teachers through the power of confession, revealing the conscience of the teacher; (b) provide "continuous vigilance over oneself" (Foucault, 2014, p. 324); and (c) employ discourses that are constructed as caring for teachers, for their own good.

#### **4.1.2.3. *Pastoral power and the research interview***

Pastoral power also operates within the unequal relationship of the research interview, where the interviewer shepherds the participant into a certain construction of the 'truth' that accords with the purpose of the research (Toll & Crumpler, 2004). An awareness of and thus guarding against these contingencies was made highly achievable by the use of research assistants (Section 3.3.2.2, p. 91), where the researcher was able to engage with the interview data one step removed and the pastoral power of a single researcher was diffused.

#### **4.1.2.4. *The relationship of power to ethics***

The understanding of the formation of the teacher-as-subject as an ontological ongoing process of 'becoming' professional was discussed in Section 2.7.3 (p. 61). In Foucauldian terms, ontological formation—the process of becoming—is a process of liberating self-formation that is neverending (Ball, 2013; O'Leary, 2002). Close to the end of his life, when his own thinking was most formed, Foucault commented: "Liberty is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the deliberate form assumed by liberty" (Foucault, 1987, p. 115).

Foucault made the following comments about the relationship of freedom to power:

In the relations of power, there is necessarily the possibility of resistance, for if there were no possibility of resistance—of violent resistance, of escape, of ruse, of strategies that reverse the situation—there would be no relations of power. This being the general form, I refuse to answer the question that I am often asked: "But if power is everywhere, then there is no liberty." I answer: If there are relations of power throughout every social field it is because there is freedom

everywhere. Now there are effectively states of domination. In many cases the relations of power are fixed in such a way that they are perpetually asymmetrical [sic] and the margin of liberty is extremely limited. (Foucault, 1987, p. 123)

If “ethics is the deliberate form assumed by liberty” (Foucault, 1987, p. 115), then care of the other (before care of the self) is the deliberate form assumed by pastoral power—“pastoral power is a power of care” (Foucault, 2009, p. 127). It is the nature of teachers’ work that they are attuned to the politics of care in relation to students, but perhaps less so in relation to the way *they* are ‘cared for’ by strategies, like the implementation of professional standards, ostensibly put in place to advance the profession. Care of the self is the Foucauldian tool to which we now turn.

#### 4.1.3. Care of the self

It is perhaps an unremarkable piece of teacher wisdom that self-knowledge precedes knowledge of one’s students. As Palmer (2007) reflects:

Knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well. (p. 3)

Foucault terms the process of liberating self-formation ‘care of the self’, the title of his last major volume (Foucault, 1986). In his late reflections, he affirms that one must take care of the self first in order to be able to care for others in a way which is not dominating but liberating (Foucault, 1987). Pastoral power uses care of the other as a technique of control and subjugation; care of the self, on the other hand, makes mastery over the self the *prior* responsibility. Consequently, a teacher who cares for the self correctly will, “by that very fact, in a measure... behave correctly in relationship to others and for others” (Foucault, 1987, p. 118).

Care of the self involves the development of a self-referential ‘critical ontology’, which Foucault describes in the following way:

The critical ontology of ourselves... must be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them. (Foucault, 1997b, p. 319)

The ethical self, then, is the antidote to subjugating pastoral power (O’Leary, 2002), an antidote which in the current context refers to the limiting portrayal of teacher which inheres professional standards (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). The free ethical self is able to question the rationality of professional standards and critique their threat. In the process, we make the creative, transformative ontological shift from knowing ‘what we do’ to knowing ‘who we are’.

Foucault describes the transformative ontological shift through the exemplar of Socrates (Foucault, 1986; 2006; 2011), who exercises an “art of existence” (Foucault, 1986, p. 238) and is authentically ethical “because what he says accords exactly with what he thinks, and what he thinks accords exactly with what he does” (Foucault, 2006, p. 42). For teachers, professional standards will not be authentically ethical if what professional standards say they do (make a teacher a better teacher) do not match with teachers’ actual experience of them. Where a dissonance between word and deed exists, Foucault notes the historical precedence of “pastoral counter-conducts” (Foucault, 2009, p. 204), especially effective in organised groups. As a community of subjects, a depowered teaching profession often lacks a collective care of the self sufficient to mount counter-conducts, leaving the direction and promotion of their profession to others (Monteiro, 2015). A shared ethics narrative of teachers and teaching, created by teachers, is one possible way in which to nurture care of the self. A shared ethics *narrative* matters because it is through the faculty of narrative that one is able to give “an account of oneself” and, as such, narrative is “the prerequisite condition for any account of moral agency we might give” (Butler, 2005, p. 12). It needs to be a *shared* ethics narrative because “we are constituted in relationality” (Butler, 2005, p. 64). A shared ethics narrative is the care of the self that teachers require to resist the distorting effects of pastoral power and to create the dialogic relation with the neverending process of becoming.



Awareness of the formation of our own subjectivity in relation to power and freedom was, Foucault came to resolve, at the heart of all his philosophical endeavours (Foucault, 1996e; 2000c). The subject has a history; it is constituted by its context (Butler, 2005). This is why professional standards matter to teachers' professional identity. They are a part of a teacher's history of the self and, where they are mandated, contribute to constituting a part of what a teacher becomes. Professional standards such as the AITSL Standards encourage reflexivity, but only self-assessment as a technology; it is not an innocent task. The act of self-assessment engages the teacher in the ongoing process of the formation of the self. Undertaking self-assessment within the limiting contingencies of the construction of professional identity inhering professional standards begins its work on reconstituting the professional identity of the teacher (Butler, 2005; Watson & Drew, 2015). Care of the self is identity-creating in a more critical and constructive way (Foucault, 2011; Peters & Besley, 2007), involving a more artful and activist awareness of the strategies, techniques, politics, mechanisms and apparatus governing teachers' conduct (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Olssen, 2007; Stickney, 2012).

Foucault's framing of the concepts of pastoral power and the care of the self offers tools with which to analyse teachers' relation to professional standards. Firstly, the potential effects of pastoral power upon teachers through the mechanism of professional standards 'caring' for them, seeking to raise the standard of the profession, seeking to develop their teacher quality, offers a lens through which to analyse how professional standards work on teachers. Secondly, care of the self offers a lens through which to imagine how teachers might work with professional standards in ways which do not diminish them.

#### **4.1.4. Problematisation**

An element of responding to power asserted over us, Foucault believed, was to resist its immobilising force by "the refusal to accept as self-evident the things that are proposed to us" (Foucault, 1988c, p. 11). Problematisation is the questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions about the world (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013, p. 2). In the Foucauldian approach, it utilises genealogy (Section 4.1.1, p. 111) to make the familiar strange (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994,

p. 174). It is the gut feeling that the present is not quite right (Gutting, 2005a). In education policy research, problematisation challenges “a pervasive logic that maintains educational *problems* can be *solved* in, with, or through policy” (Webb, 2014, p. 364, emphasis in original).

To problematise, firstly one needs to understand the context of the evolution of the idea or institution in question. The importance of context for problematisation is a rationale for the extended reflection on the background to professional standards covered in Chapter 1. Once this is understood, the assumptions upon which successive iterations of the idea or institution emerged can be challenged (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). Santoro and Kennedy (2015) speak of “the globally accepted premise that teacher quality can be enhanced through professional standards” (p. 11). It is precisely such an assertion that is challenged by problematisation. The problematisation of professional standards that emerges from Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 is that the technical rationality of the AITSL Standards may mitigate against them achieving their stated intention of improving teacher quality and that they may actually narrow and limit teachers’ professional identities. This mitigation takes place through the process of normalisation, which is the last of the Foucauldian tools to which we now turn.

#### **4.1.5. Normalisation**

Within the Foucauldian paradigm, normalisation is the chief means of the exercise of power (Rouse, 2005). Normalisation is a process of categorisation according to the dictates of a dominant discourse that determines acceptability on a continuum. Normalisation is coercive in as much as deviation from the norm provides the necessary rationale within a discourse for intervention to correct the ‘abnormal’. There is a pernicious dimension to this: Whereas the binary distinction of permitted and forbidden provides a clear demarcation point for intervention, normativity conceptualises deviancy as merely matters of degrees from what is considered normal—thus intervention and the exercise of power can be justified at virtually any point and is enacted through technologies of surveillance (Foucault, 1995; Kemmis, 1993; Rabinow, 1984). Normality conceived this way is, of its nature, limiting of human potential.

The neutering of educational politics by a neoliberal discourse that emphasises standardised technical competence and transforms education into merely an entity of the knowledge economy (Clarke, 2012a; Seddon, 2009) is a prime example of the limiting and normalising action of discourse. A process of normalisation of school practice has been underway for many years in the UK and is well enough noted (Ball, 1994; Coffield, 2007; Brundrett & Rhodes, 2011). Although a critical understanding of the process of normalisation is present in the Australian literature (Bourke, 2011; Kemmis, 1993; Meredyth, 1998; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), it is overshadowed by more *normative* literature that fails to acknowledge its own normalising effects (Webster-Wright, 2009). With respect to the current research, professional standards can be understood as a technology of surveillance in the process of normalisation in education.

The shift that Foucault (1995) describes in *Discipline and Punish* is the shift from the punishment of the body to the punishment of the soul. This is a relative strengthening of the tactics of power that are more rather than less oppressive. From a genealogical perspective, this *ontological* shift can be seen operating in the enactment of professional standards. Ironically, instrumentalist professional standards do not articulate the ontological dimension of teaching particularly well, but in defining what a teacher is to ‘look like’, an ontological shift has already occurred, exerting pressure on teachers regarding “what they are, will be, may be” (Foucault, 1995, p. 18).

Discourses are the means by which normalisation is actualised and technologies of surveillance are justified. They are sufficiently powerful to determine what is sayable and unsayable, doable and undoable (Ryan & Bourke, 2013). Neoliberalism (Section 2.4, p. 39) is a discourse that fits into this Foucauldian paradigm, whereby its dominance is such that many of the people responsible for the construction of policy and strategy cannot conceive of an alternative way to imagine the world (Ball, 2012; Wrigley, 2012). Consistent with Foucault, Ball (2012) contends that the state, too, is under the control of various discourses—not least of all the neoliberal discourse. Ball (2012) also claims that we still do not have well developed

research methods for determining the extent of power and influence of networked public policy. To the extent that the AITSL Standards are a part of networked neoliberal education policy of the global metropole, Ball's comments serve to highlight the importance of the current research as contributive to knowledge in this area.

Teachers as much as any other group, perhaps more so, unconsciously foreclose on the application of a critical lens to policy and in so doing become captive participants in the imaginary that neoliberal policies perpetuate. Stickney (2012) illustrates well, in his own educational jurisdiction of Ontario, how word games like "brain-based learning" and "authentic assessment-for-success" are dealt with as authoritative texts that are not questioned. The AITSL Standards are replete with these word games. It is argued here that teachers don't often seek to *know* about the "evidentiary bases" for these phrases, but "perform the rhetoric superficially" (p. 655) that satisfies their auditors that they *know how*. In so doing, teachers contribute to the construction of monolithic, normalising discourses.

Normalising discourses are seductive, because 'good' teachers can be convinced that working hard at getting things 'right' within the limiting parameters that discourses construct provides its own taste of power and the pleasures that this brings (Foucault, 1996c; 1996d). Power, constructed as positive feedback loops within normalising discourses, produces a desire to continue to participate in the acts which perpetuate a normalising discourse, reifying it and strengthening it (Foucault, 1996f). Pastoral power, in particular, transforms desire into discourse (Foucault, 1978). The seduction of professional standards discourses is that the teacher stands to gain the power and the pleasure of the expert, high status teacher and this produces its own desire, conviction in the truth of the standards, and so on. The check on this closed loop is the derivation of pleasure and power from within the teacher, rather than from external sources, through a care of the self (Foucault, 1985; 1986). Care of the self adopts a critical outlook on the world and asks the question, not only of professional standards, but of all policy instruments in operation in education, 'In whose interest is this?'

This chapter has sought to elucidate critical tools which are useful in the service of the analysis of teachers' experience of professional standards. This chapter links the chapters which precede it with the chapters to follow. Foucauldian perspectives informed the research direction, for example, in the problematisation of professional standards in Chapters 1 and 2. Foucauldian perspectives also informed the research design, in the decision to use research assistants (Section 3.3.2.2, p. 91). Looking in the other direction, forward to the remaining chapters, it has been argued that while research on education has made wide use of the critical tool of governmentality, the lesser utilised Foucauldian tools of pastoral power and care of the self have the potential to cast new light onto the problem which this thesis considers; that problem, to restate it, is as follows: Firstly, the strong accountability context of the AITSL Standards places one of their stated aims—the quality improvement of teachers—at risk. The second element of the problem is a concomitant of the first: There is an apparent dissonance between the accountability that others want of teachers and the improvement agenda that teachers want for themselves. Having gathered the necessary data and tools to address this problem, we turn now to the findings of the research.

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## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

This chapter, representing the key findings of the research, will be presented in three parts. Firstly, each of eight categories of description will be described in turn. These categories of description, as explained above in Section 3.2.2 (p. 74), do not represent the perspective or perception of any individual or group of teachers, but rather describe the pools of meaning distilled from the 3515 references coded in 171 nodes in the initial coding of the research data in NVivo.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the research process (described in general terms in Section 3.3.3.1, p. 94), which mapped the relationships between the categories of description to arrive at the phenomenographic ‘outcome space’, will be described. Thirdly, the surprising and significant data concerning what is missing in the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Standards will be considered.

We have seen in Section 1.2.2.1 (p. 20) that competing discourses are evident in the quality teaching agenda, of which the AITSL Standards are an element. One question that is asked is: What are the contesting discourses operating within professional standards? Two discourses are highlighted: the discourse of quality assurance and the discourse of quality improvement. As will be seen, it is into these two major discourses that the minor discourses evident in the emic and sometimes inchoate perspectives of the research participants are aggregated. The caveat regarding binary formations, offered in the introduction to Chapter 2, bears repeating, namely, that the juxtaposing of quality assurance with quality improvement is an artificial binary construction; one limitation of such a binary construction is that it has the potential to form one discourse as normative and the other as deviant (Singh, 2011). On the other hand, as

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2. A secondary review of each interview transcript to code it ‘holistically’ against the emergent categories of description was also undertaken and is graphically represented in Appendix R (p. 318). This secondary review was suggested by some of the phenomenographic methodology literature (cf Åkerlind, 2005; Collier-Reed & Ingerman, 2013). The secondary review consisted of re-considering each of the transcripts, listening holistically for the dominant discourse evident in each. The exercise did not reveal any particularly useful additional insights. At the very least, it did increase researcher familiarity with the transcript data and affirmed the veracity of coding and oncoding of different nodes, which continued to be adjusted and renamed throughout the process. For example, the parent node titles ‘strong agency’ and ‘weak agency’ were fairly late refinements in the process.

Singh also points out, the analysis of binaries can lead to “their disruption rather than reproduction” (2011, p. xviii). Or to put it another way, “what is interesting is always interconnection, not the primacy of this over that, which never has any meaning” (Foucault, 2000b, p. 362). The justification for the use of the binary construction quality assurance and quality improvement is that it mimics the broader quality agenda that has been presented in recent years in education; it is the language of education and the world in which teachers, more or less consciously, operate and to which they reacted and responded in the interviews conducted for this research. The following eight subsections will present the two major categories of description built around the concepts of quality assurance and quality improvement, as well as six other pools of data cut from the research material which were sufficiently prominent to qualify as categories of description.

### **5.1. CATEGORY OF DESCRIPTION 1: QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Teachers reported an “overwhelming accountability” (Kristen, St Charity’s) dimension of professional standards and this was the most coded node in the initial open coding process of the interview data in NVivo. Indeed, nearly all participants (n=68) touched on the issue of accountability. One teacher expressed the panopticon nature of professional standards for teachers when she commented:

*While the Standards aren’t necessarily at the front of your mind... in terms of accountability there is at the front of your mind an aspect that says: “Keep that in mind, keep that in mind.” (Olivia, St Abigail’s)*

Another participant, in response to a question which asked for her view about where the push for professional standards for teachers had come from, made the comment that:

*To me there has always been a public perception that teachers perhaps aren’t as professional as other professions. (Mary, St Baldwin’s)*

and that the agenda was one of accountability:



*The expectations of students going to university to do teaching is that we are a profession and so therefore along with that these are the minimum standards at least required. (Mary, St Baldwin's)*

The connection between a perceived public perception of teachers as low status or something less than fully professional went hand in hand for many participants with the perceived need for a set of professional accountability standards. In articulating this, many teachers (n=38) perhaps unintentionally participated in what Maguire (2014) terms “discourses of derision” (p. 778) about teachers and teaching, not so named but nonetheless oft remarked upon in the literature (see, for example, in reference to Australia: Dinham, 2013a; Thompson & Cook, 2014; in reference to the US: Ravitch, 2010; in reference to the UK: Maguire, 2014). One participant, in reflecting on the motivation of education authorities in introducing professional standards for teachers, participates in a discourse of derision when she says:

*I think first and foremost they want to get the results, they want the education system, they want the results from the students, and especially when they compare our results to the rest of the world. I think that there are a lot of teachers that perhaps aren't professional and aren't that great and this is maybe their way of getting rid of some people—I know that doesn't sound very nice... (Maria, St Baldwin's)*

A variety of other sub-themes also emerged in the initial open coding of the interview data which have been aggregated under the broad category of quality assurance. Regular reference was made to the phrases ‘ticking boxes’, ‘paperwork’, and ‘jumping through hoops’ as ways of expressing a perception that the AITSL Standards were overly bureaucratic. The perception that:

*The accountability to those standards is just putting a name to something you already do. (Valeria, St Charity's)*

added to the overall sense of a burdensome bureaucracy. Valerie was one of 45 participants who shared this view.

Notions of surveillance (Webb, 2009), performativity (Ball, 2003) and a sense of an audit culture (Power, 1997; Apple, 2005; Coffield, 2007; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) could also be discerned in the focus of participants on this category of quality assurance. Surveillance is evident in the comment that the AITSL Standards are:

*...more to keep tabs on everybody. (Seraphina, St Giles')*

Ball defines performativity as:

a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change—based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). (Ball, 2003, p. 216)

Such a performativity is reflected in the way teachers think about professional standards, evidenced in these remarks:

*I would prefer to think of it as a professional step. I would prefer to think of it as coming from inside the profession, to be able to bring an Australian teaching standard up to European standards or other countries; I think [our standards are] probably kind of falling down a little bit. (Renata, St Charity's)*

*I can't rest on my laurels... I will probably have to be more answerable, as if I were a new teacher, to all those who are monitoring teaching standards. (Bernard, St Day's)*

Consciousness of audit culture is evident repeatedly in the interview data:

*It is sort of like in an audit, you are just putting together and proving that you are actually meeting all of these [standards]. (Terri, St Charity's)*

*Solicitors and accountants, they have a big role and they have to keep all their documentation and... go through an audit in order to be accredited. I understand that's what [education authorities] want to do—a similar thing with teachers. (Claudia, St Fabian's)*

*I think you are truly working in a professional environment when there is some sort of watch dog keeping an eye on your professional*

*standards. If you are a lawyer you have to do the same thing; if you're a nurse you have to do the same thing; if you are a doctor you have to do the same thing; so I just think it keeps us aware of our learning and encourages us to be ongoing learners. (Rosalind, St Day's)*

The notion of the teacher as a compliant officer (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009) under the regulatory control of professional standards was also identified among the participants' responses (n=27):

*I get that there needs to be some kind of regulation to make sure teachers are doing their job properly. (Alan, St Abigail's)*

Awareness of neoliberal norms was evident in teachers' comments about the marketisation and corporatisation of teaching, as highlighted by these examples:

*The thing I don't like is that we constantly see this idea of a business discourse being introduced in education and this seems to me very similar to the way things are done in accounting... I don't think it's the best way to do it. I think there are lots of elements in those documents that are well-intentioned and they are really quite good and I can see why that would make a good teacher but is it the best way that they could have done it? If they have taken it from a business discourse I think they are missing a lot because schools should be run like schools because we are dealing with kids, we are not dealing with money or objects. (Kent, St Charity's)*

*I just get the feeling maybe it is turning into a corporation, I could be completely wrong, but that is the vibe I get from discussion with other people as well. (Bridget, St Fabian's)*

*Going corporate, is that really going to help? (Nata, St Giles')*

Policy borrowing from overseas jurisdictions (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Morris, 2012; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012; Waldow, 2012; Waldow, Takayama, & Sung, 2014), another feature of neoliberal policy development, was also noted by some participants. Teachers also reflected some of the language of crisis construction (Gamble, 2009; Clarke & Newman, 2010; Dinham, 2013a; Slater, 2015; Zajda, 2014), also a dimension of neoliberal rhetoric.

The rhetoric of the AITSL Standards is that they even-handedly address both quality assurance and quality improvement. This rhetoric was not matched by the perceptions of teachers who heavily focused on the discourse of quality assurance in their reflections. A majority of participants (n=65) expressed negativity regarding the AITSL Standards. Teachers variously expressed suspicion, anxiety, resentment, cynicism, fear, uncertainty and a lack of trust in the AITSL Standards.

In summary, notions of accountability, bureaucracy, surveillance, performativity, audit culture, corporatisation, and elements of neoliberal rhetoric have been aggregated under the category of quality assurance, the term which best describes the broad discourse on professional standards which these views represent. The perception that professional standards were being used as a tool to prosecute a quality assurance agenda was the most prominent category of description evident in the interview data.

## **5.2. CATEGORY OF DESCRIPTION 2: QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

A majority (n=69) of the participants also spent some time reflecting on the potential of professional standards for teachers to improve the quality of teaching and teachers. The proportion of interview time devoted to this category of description was only exceeded by the first category of description named in Section 5.1 (p. 126), quality assurance.

Participants engaged in reflection on quality improvement largely in the context of discussion around their own professional learning.<sup>3</sup> Professional learning from the AITSL Standards was seen to be strongest when it was perceived that professional standards aided teacher reflexivity:

*If I think back, if [professional standards accreditation] is done properly, then there is a real sense of personal reflection. The real value of the portfolio is that you do reflect on the Standards and you think about your practice and you think about those things. I can*

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3. Participants used the terms “professional learning” and “professional development” interchangeably. This typical use by teachers has been noted elsewhere (Mayer & Lloyd, 2011).

*consider that now in hindsight.* (Saxon, St Charity's)

In discussing professional learning, teachers are aware that they are working in an environment where collaboration with their peers is encouraged:

*There is a great push now for collaboration within the department and between different departments and schools.* (Tim, St Giles')

and there is a strong positivity about this, although some teachers suggest that they do not have the opportunity to collaborate enough. The AITSL Standards accreditation process for New Scheme teachers has engendered an environment of collaboration through observation, as the following example illustrates.

*Sometimes I think: I wish someone could just come in, assess me, and tell me whether I'm doing a good job, and maybe just have the Standards in front of them.* (Mitch, St Giles')

But it is observing others, rather than in *being* observed, that teachers most desire, as these vignettes attest:

*In our department we've got a lot of teachers who are younger teachers—New Scheme teachers—and my observation is they don't want you to go into their classroom and observe them and tell them what to do; they've done that in prac[ticum]. They want the opportunities to go and look at what other people are doing that are paralleling what they're doing and it opens up a whole lot of stuff, doesn't it?* (Sara, St Abigail's)

*As a new teacher I remember I went in and sat in on the teachers that were near retirement and their wealth of knowledge and the things that you learnt from them... to put you back in the spot of being a student is the best PD [professional development] you can get, because you understand boredom, you understand engagement [laughter], you understand flow, pace... differentiation... I think that's the best experience for you; just to listen—there is so much collective wisdom.* (Ruby, St Day's)

There is a sense, though, that the opportunity to observe others does not happen enough.

Teacher Paris offers an example of this when she reflects on the role of teacher-mentors working with New Scheme teachers:

*Even the mentors—I think a lot of the time it is just ticking boxes. There could be a more valuable way of doing it and I see the value of lesson observation, you know, team teaching, collaborative stuff, that I think would be more beneficial. (Paris, St Fabian's)*

Teachers demonstrated an awareness of the capacity of the AITSL Standards to contribute to and promote professional learning, especially through their encouragement of teacher reflexivity and a culture of collaboration and observation. As indicated by this final excerpt, there was evidence of some penetration and acceptance of the premises of the quality teacher discourse discussed above in Section 1.2 (p. 4):

*It's always good that the government is putting money into education and improving the quality of education, so I'm imagining that the purpose is always quality. (Mitch, St Giles')*

In summary, notions of collaboration, observation, being supported, advancement, validation, standards-as-aspirational and capacity building have been aggregated under the category of quality improvement, the term which best describes the broad discourse on professional standards which these views represent. The perception of professional standards being a tool to prosecute a quality improvement agenda was the second most prominent category of description evident in the interview data.

### **5.3. CATEGORY OF DESCRIPTION 3: CONTRA-PROFESSIONALISM**

There were a set of responses by participants which have been coined here as contra-professional. In this conception, professional standards for teachers actually work contra to the interests of teachers and their professionalism. A majority of the nodes aggregated in NVivo as contra-professional were from New Scheme teachers (63%). This is perhaps unsurprising, as it is New Scheme teachers who have had the greatest exposure to the AITSL Standards through the requirement that they be accredited against them.

The major concern from teachers (n=23) was a lack of confidence in the accreditation process. For New Scheme teachers, they were particularly critical of the written report that was required to be sent to the New South Wales (NSW) Institute of Teachers (now the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards New South Wales—BOSTES) for initial accreditation or ongoing maintenance of accreditation:

*I know my report for the last maintenance of accreditation was just garbage. I just regurgitated what the standard said, without actually proving anything and that too has been approved. (Valeria, St Charity's)*

*[My accreditation report] got sent away [for the second time] and I don't think I heard about it for a good 10 or 11 months; it was quite ridiculous. To be honest, if you say one of the best things we can give kids is feedback (and we're like the students in this process), I didn't really benefit from the feedback. (Kent, St Charity's)*

Pre-New Scheme teachers' observations of what New Scheme teachers had to do to achieve accreditation reflected a similar lack of confidence in the process:

*I think [New Scheme teachers undergoing accreditation] could best use their time in other ways to be perfectly honest. I have seen the pages and pages and pages of documentation and things that they have to submit. I think the benefit lies in the observing of the lessons, the fact that people go in and observe them, I think they would benefit, rather than spending that time writing out a program or whatever, going into another teacher's class and observing that lesson. I don't know the details of the paperwork because I haven't sat and looked at it, but I have seen the mountains of paperwork that have been sent off and I think—and I could be completely wrong—but I think a lot of it is just ticking a box: "I've shown that I planned the lesson; here is my lesson." Maybe they didn't actually teach that lesson to that plan or maybe they were just making up an evaluation; a lot of it is made up and a lot of them pass this stuff around. (Paris, St Fabian's)*

Also coded at this category of description were responses which suggested that professional standards are an irrelevance or tangential to what teachers (n=17) see as central to their work. As one teacher put it:

*If the documents didn't exist schools would still run and they would be full of good-intentioned people wanting to help kids learn. (Kent, St Charity's)*

Even more than that, others (n=19) felt that professional standards actually distracted them from teaching:

*I think that the paper work and the bureaucracy can take people away from the classroom instead of actually assisting them in their classroom teaching. (Chiara, St Abigail's)*

*I just think that this system will take us away from what our core is and our core is to create meaningful lessons. (Ruby, St Day's)*

*[Accreditation] doesn't have any real positive effects on my teaching. And it detracted from the time that I had as a starting teacher. (Boris, St Edbert's)*

It is also interesting to note that New Scheme teachers tended to speak of their accreditation report as akin to an 'assignment', or as an extension of university days, reflecting a sense of their teacher-student or shepherd-shepherded pastoral power relationship (Foucault, 2009) to the Institute of Teachers or more latterly, BOSTES.

In summary, a strongly expressed perception of professional standards as being essentially unhelpful to the core business of classroom work was evident in the interview data.

#### **5.4. CATEGORY OF DESCRIPTION 4: STRONG AGENCY**

Strong agency is the fourth category of description discerned in the interview data. What is meant by strong agency is that teachers have a strong sense of their power to control their professional destiny (Bandura, 2006; 2008). The category of strong agency is connected to the notion widely held by teachers (n=26) that experience matters. As one New Scheme teacher observed:

*It tends to be this idea (and I think it's valid) that in Old Scheme<sup>4</sup>*



*teachers, it seems as though experience holds more currency than professional development. (Kent, St Charity's)*

The belief was stronger among more experienced teachers in the participant sample that teacher professional standards would not necessarily enhance their professionalism; their focus was on classroom work built on years of experience:

*I just go about my everyday business built on experience. Now as I said I've been teaching for 18 years and I've had lots of success with my students that have gone through the Higher School Certificate so I know I'm doing the right thing. I don't focus on those types of paperwork and policy. In the classroom I just make sure that I'm delivering my course, making sure that my students are engaged in their learning and just making sure that I'm up to date with everything that I need to, like my reporting, my marking and that everything that is set at St Day's—that I meet that. That is my first priority. (Billi, St Day's)*

The conception of professional standards for teachers in this category of description suggests that teacher ability was highly contextual, and the strategies that made a teacher highly effective in one setting may be “*completely useless*” (Sean, St Fabian's) in another.

In this set of participant responses, the source of teachers' affirmation of their work was strongly described not to be in professional standards for teachers but rather in their relational connection to their students:

*The idea of the Standard is to keep people at a standard and continue to progress; I see that happening and teachers who aren't even New Scheme... in the Old Scheme you know what I mean? I see that the Standard is not what's pushing them along; it's that they love what they're doing and they love the kids and so they're trying to give them*

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4. 'Old Scheme' is a moniker used by teachers to apply to those who are non-New Scheme teachers, that is, teachers who commenced teaching in New South Wales prior to 1 October 2004. At the time the interviews were conducted, non-New Scheme teachers were not required to undergo the AITSL Standards accreditation process. This has since been changed by the NSW government adoption (NSW Government, 2014) of the recommendation of its white paper *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning* (Bruniges, et al., 2013). The new regulations will see non-New Scheme teachers needing to be accredited against the National Standards by 2018.

*the best. So I don't think that the Standards are necessarily a motivating force.* (Chiara, St Abigail's)

In this conception of professional standards, it is the relationality of teaching which teachers feel is missing. Professional standards for teachers are not necessarily seen as a bad thing—indeed they may be necessary; but they are not sufficient. In reflecting on the intentions of some authorities to link professional standards for teachers to pay scales, one participant captures this point well when she says:

*We want people to be appointed to positions on their merits. I don't have a problem with that. But it's got to be more than just a professional standard. It's got to be the whole person—the relationship with fellow staff, with students, coping under pressure, all those kinds of things as well.* (Seraphina, St Giles')

#### **5.4.1. Enactment**

This section utilises the concept of enactment developed by Ball and his colleagues (Ball, et al., 2012; Maguire, Braun, & Ball, 2015). Policy enactment, in this case, the enactment of the AITSL Standards, is to be distinguished from policy implementation. The former is the way that policy is interpreted, translated, and creatively manipulated into a recontextualised set of actions in schools (Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011); the latter is what the policy writers intend to happen. Policymakers' frequent disappointment at the failure of policy is sheeted home to poor implementation. This is perhaps presciently illustrated by the quote attributed to John Hattie of the University of Melbourne, highlighted in AITSL's initial review of the AITSL Standards. Hattie states that:

The success, or not, of the Standards influencing teacher quality will be largely a function of the success of their implementation. (Clinton, et al., 2014, p. 5)

The noteworthiness of this policymaker's comment is emphasised by the fact that Hattie was appointed by the Federal Education Minister to the position of Chair of AITSL three months later. The statement, though, does not account for the ways in which teachers' assemblages,

accountability choreographies, mediations, fabrications, games of power, brokerage, weighing, omissions, additions, reinterpretations and silences differ from the intentions of policymakers' implementation plans (Ball, et al., 2012; Foucault, 1996b; Riveros & Viczko, 2015; Stickney, 2012; Thrupp, 2005b; Webb, 2002; 2006; 2009).

Less experienced teachers in this study tended to express a higher degree of compliance, as has been noted elsewhere (Ball, et al., 2012), but more experienced teachers indicated that they would “*work around the system*” (Carmel, St Fabian's). Experienced teachers were “*far more resistant to educational change than the younger ones*” (Carmel, St Fabian's). At the same time as being more highly compliant, less experienced, New Scheme teachers expressed resentment at the imposition of the AITSL Standards at twice the relative rate of pre-New Scheme teachers; this is perhaps to be explained by the fact that New Scheme teachers are directly engaged with responding to the accountability demand of the AITSL Standards. In the discursive practices discerned in this category of description, teachers recontextualised, selectively applied and creatively manipulated the AITSL Standards to enhance the work that they saw as important in their particular school context. This is consistent with research findings regarding policy enactment in English secondary schools (Maguire, et al., 2015).

When teachers enact professional standards policy, they show high levels of expertise in filtering policy expectations to meet their own perceived teacher needs which best fit their personal context. When specifically asked the question if there was something missing from the AITSL Standards, teachers expressed in the interviews an awareness of the importance of different [teacher] dispositions, but they couldn't quite fully articulate this as a dimension of teacher professional standards (Schön, 2005; Hébert, 2015). The inability to express fully the dimensions of *being* teacher could potentially hamper teachers' ability to influence the larger policy debate around professional standards for teachers, but it did not appear to impede their ability to use that inchoate awareness to be adept enactors of professional standards for teachers policy.

### 5.4.2. Strong personal agency

The term agency refers to the capacity of individuals “to make free or independent choices, to engage in autonomous actions, and to exercise judgment in the interests of others and oneself” (Campbell, 2012, p. 183). B. Davies (1991) however, emphasises that we are always bound within certain discourses, but to recognise that reality and “to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted” (p. 51) is at the heart of agency that gives authority to the voice of the individual or the group. Edwards (2015) identifies a consensus that teacher agency accords with themes of responsibility and self-critique; the degree to which teachers assume responsibility for acting on their own professional judgements relates to relatively stronger or weaker agency. It is worthy of note that responsibility and acting in the interests of others are regarded by Professions Australia and the AITSL Standards Councils (of Australia) to be hallmarks of professionalism (Professions Australia, 2015; Professional Standards Councils, 2015). That having been said, while the concept of agency per se is well researched, the specific notion of teacher agency is less so (Priestley, Edwards, & Priestley, 2012), and might variously refer to teachers’ capacity to support externally imposed policy or, in contradistinction, to make professional judgements that resist policy implementation or challenge future policy directions. In the present context, strong teacher agency is meant in the latter sense.

While there were examples of participants expressing strong teacher agency in this study, it was not apparent that their agency extended beyond their own immediate sphere of influence. That sphere of influence was most frequently expressed as ‘my students’ and ‘my classroom’. Teachers could be said to be expressing strong *personal* agency, but not strong agency that is heard often—or at all—beyond their classroom, their staffroom, or their home school. One teacher put it this way:

*You’ve got some phenomenally highly experienced teachers or highly accomplished teachers who are demonstrating leadership... but [referring to the AITSL Standards] not to these bullet points. (Ruby, St Day’s)*

The strong negativity that participants expressed in response to the quality assurance agenda of the AITSL Standards was expressed as an impatience with an externally imposed box-ticking and hoop-jumping that distracted teachers from what they want to do. As one of the research assistants, a former secondary school principal, said in the final debriefing meeting, reflecting on the focus of teachers and engagement with policy, “*I never did anything [to engage externally]... my life was my school*” (Research Assistant A). To teachers, ‘the masters that matter’ are their students, their parents, and their colleagues. The AITSL Standards appear to teachers to address a different master and demand an accountability to a disembodied Institute of Teachers,<sup>5</sup> perceived to be a proxy of government.

The word ‘agency’, in the sense of ‘teacher agency’ is not used in the AITSL Standards nor in any of the AITSL documents referenced in this thesis. The term ‘professional judgement’ is not used either. The one exception is where the term is used twice in the *Draft National Professional Standards for Teachers: Consultation Report* (AITSL, 2010). In that instance, some consultation respondents had called for the inclusion of professional judgement in the final version of the AITSL Standards but their advice was not heeded. The absence of “expert professional judgement” as a key teacher capacity is a significant omission from the AITSL Standards, given the increasing international recognition of its importance for contributing to strong school cultures which will be continuously improving (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014, p. 9).

#### **5.4.3. Strong school culture as the context for strong agency**

Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2012) argue that teacher agency is not so much an individual matter as it is a capacity manifested “in and through concrete contexts for action” (p. 7). Indeed, many participants in the present study expressed their sense of agency through their

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5. ‘Institute of Teachers’ was the term generally used by research participants to refer to the statutory body responsible for the administration of the AITSL Standards. On 1 January 2014, responsibility for the administration of the AITSL Standards in NSW was handed over to BOSTES (NSW Government, 2014).

satisfaction with the culture of learning in the school in which they worked. It was well articulated in this interview exchange:

*Sergius, (St Giles): Here, the majority of teachers would be highly accomplished, whereas at other schools they may just be proficient... And I think that happens naturally here, that you're around teachers that are highly accomplished.*

*Interviewer: You've used the words, "That happens naturally here." What did you mean by that—the [AITSL] Standards?*

*Sergius: There is such a vast array of expertise across all KLAs [Key Learning Areas]. That could be an element of naivety from me, given that this is my only school; that could exist everywhere. But here, my experience is that there's a bit of a culture—and there's also a good mix of youth and experience—where new things occur. By "naturally," I mean that there's a strong staff who push each other along and help each other out and offer a bit of guidance to say, "well, that's what a 10-year maths teacher is like—that's what I need to be like."*

The sense that the culture of the school was a key factor in allowing teachers to teach to what was perceived to be a high professional standard was evident across the range of schools in the study. As in the example offered above, a positive school culture was understood to be the enabling environment in which teachers could develop their professionalism. In other words, school culture allowed teachers to express a strong sense of agency.

### **5.5. CATEGORY OF DESCRIPTION 5: WEAK AGENCY**

If strong teacher agency is to be understood as teachers taking responsibility for acting on strong judgements in the interests of others, then weak agency can be understood as the counterpoint to this: weak agency is used here as a descriptor for research participants' responses which reflected a sense of powerlessness, resignation and a ceding of control to others. The notion was summarised succinctly by one of the research assistants when he wrote, reflecting following a debriefing session:

*[In our discussion] I referred to the general response of teachers who were not really keen on the Standards issue for whatever reasons as*

*being somewhat accepting/anti but not rebelliously so. However, 'accepting' is too weak a word and I was never really happy that that [word] summed up the feelings I had picked up. The more accurate word to describe the general response would be 'powerless'. I picked up from almost all of them an overwhelming sense of powerlessness, that this—and any and every other issue coming at them—is something else that is coming from somewhere outside themselves and from outside their professional school environment, and they had/have no input, no discussion, no power of their own wisdom or opinion; nothing that actually comes from their work, from their discussion, their focus, their drives. (Research Assistant C)*

The powerlessness of teachers faced with the implementation of a new set of teacher professional standards was expressed in a number of ways in the research data. Resignation and a sense of inevitability were strongly represented. “*They’ll never listen,*” said Paulo (St Abigail’s), and his colleague expressed it this way:

*Four years ago when I started, teachers sort of wanted to fight it and they said ‘Oh I’ll never join the Institute’ or whatever but now there is just inevitability that everyone is going to be part of the Institute in the coming years. (Roger, St Abigail’s)<sup>6</sup>*

These comments were in accord with views such as “*it’s probably a good thing*” (Olivia, St Abigail’s), said more with faint hope than conviction, and other comments that acknowledged a fateful acceptance, such as “*I’ve accepted that it’s just the way it is... it was out of my hands*” (Valeria, St Charity’s); “*we probably feel very small in comparison to the larger picture and so we just grit our teeth and do it*” (Bernice, St Abigail’s); “*if it’s something that we’re told to do, we just have to do it*” (Charlotte, St Giles’); “*it’s just the way of the world, I’m philosophical about it*” (Bernard, St Day’s); and this longer submission, which assumes powerlessness in all members of the school-based hierarchy:

*Sometimes within your own school, you don’t want to say too much, you just want to come in and do what you need to do, I don’t want to cause any issue. That is not what I am like any way; but you have*

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6. Even though, at the time of this interview comment, the decision that all teachers would be brought under the provenance of the Institute of Teachers (now BOSTES) had been reached, teachers (particularly New Scheme teachers), continued to speak of the agency overseeing the AITSL Standards as ‘The Institute’.

*these conversations with your colleagues; it is not really something that you would feel comfortable going and speaking to your principal or your assistant principal, because they have got a school to run and these are all sort of things outside of their control anyway. (Kirsty, St Charity's)*

Responses from participants such as the two examples which follow, which were initially coded to 'blind trust', were on-coded to the node 'powerlessness':

*[In response to the question "Is there anything missing in the AITSL Standards?]: No I don't think so, I mean, I can't think of anything off the top of my head and I imagine... people have put hours and hours of thought into this and I'm sure there's nothing [laughter]. (Sara, St Abigail's)*

*I'm not sure where it's going. It seems like a little bit of bureaucracy and red tape. You pay your \$100 and it disappears. And you never really hear from them. I'd like to see that my money and everyone else's money is being put to good use, but again, I imagine that it must be. (Sergius, St Giles')*

These examples illustrate once again weak agency in the form of an uncritical trust that abrogates responsibility for knowledge and critical analysis in the development of the AITSL Standards and the processes surrounding them; they make vague assumptions about the good of professional standards for individual teachers and the teaching profession generally. Such uncritical or 'blind' trust, for the purposes of the theoretical framework which will be developed in Chapter 6, has been framed as a form of powerlessness, reflective of weak agency.

### **5.5.1. Implementation**

Teachers perceived that there was a weighty quality assurance agenda inherent in the implementation of the AITSL Standards. There is a sense from these teachers of reaction to an externally imposed policy, which manifests itself in a number of ways; firstly, as stress:

*The big thing for me is I feel like we work so hard as it is and I feel already—only five years into it—I'm exhausted. I love doing what I'm doing and I'm extremely passionate but I'm afraid that things like this*



*and the perception in the community and the Standards and all that kind of pressure is going to turn good teachers away from the profession; I genuinely think that, because even I started considering it. (Gloria, St Charity's)*

Despite her self-avowed passion for teaching, the early career Gloria is having second thoughts about her place in the teaching profession which she directly links to pressure borne of externally imposed policies such as the AITSL Standards. A further element that manifests in reaction to an externally imposed policy is teacher anxiety, which was prevalent in the data and is illustrated in the following example, discussing one participant's experience of the AITSL Standards accreditation process:

*It's not just the case of the younger staff hearing the story of frustrations of what we've gone through; that frustration has obviously carried through to the whole staffroom to hear that that's what they'll have to meet within the next 18 months. It has them fearing about what they actually have to do, what hoops they have to jump through to get to that level of accreditation. (Saxon, St Charity's)*

Even more prevalent in the data than the notions of fear and anxiety about the implementation of professional standards was a concern about the time commitment that professional standards accreditation would impose on teachers:

*I know someone has gone to a lot of trouble to [produce the AITSL Standards] but it just seems incredibly pedantic and I don't think it acknowledges the [classroom] loads we work with and the constant feeling of being overwhelmed. (Xanthi, St Day's)*

The sense of being overwhelmed married with a resentment of the imposition of the AITSL Standards accreditation processes, and is illustrated in this example:

*A lot [of teachers] would resent the fact that they have to do this, purely for the fact that you do so much work at school. It is all evidence—everything that we are doing—reporting and everything is online now, so it's all there and it's just a matter of getting that all together; but it's not as easy to then go through and match up all the Standards and this is what I do. So a lot of people resent the fact that it has created a lot of extra work and time that they just don't have...*

*For people who are very experienced and very good at their jobs and have been doing things a long time, I think they resent this attitude—that because they’ve been doing things for a long time—that they’re, therefore, old hat or they’re no longer any good. That’s the perceived feeling, and that they need to do this to refresh in some way like there’s something wrong... I think there is a lot of resentment. (Gretel, St Giles’)*

The sense of imposition and resentment was associated with a prevalent sentiment that imagined that teachers close to retirement age would take early retirement rather than conform to the requirements of professional standards accreditation, as the following example attests:

*Well, anyone my age—most of the people my age—and I think this will happen, won’t do it. I think that by 2017–18, when this comes about, I think you’re going to get a lot of people that will actually take retirement. They’ll take the super[annuation], because basically they’ll be past it. It’s like a cycle that goes around. People are over it; they want to do their job; it undermines you as a teacher, I think. I think it actually does the complete opposite to what they’re trying to do—to try to prove that you’re more professional. It actually takes away from that by making you more a servant to the system, really. (Tegan, St Edbert’s)*

While the example here is one person’s perception of what *might* happen, it is noteworthy because it was a sentiment expressed many times over the course of the interview phase of the research; it is a phenomenon that has also been noted in other research, associated with periods of intensive reform (Troman & Woods, 2009) and an emergent language of managerialism in schools (Day & Smethem, 2009; Keogh, 2012). It led one of the research assistants, an experienced former secondary school principal, to comment in a peer debriefing session:

*I have never heard teachers specifically say ‘I am looking to get out.’ If people did that, they normally did it after early years, about five to seven years; they knew and then they got looking while they were young. But people who were great teachers—absolutely loved it and didn’t want to do anything else and had no other idea—rarely said, I am actually looking to get a real life. (Research Assistant C)*

These responses, which reflect stress and anxiety, time pressure, resentment, and negativity

are encapsulated by the following final response, which bespeaks a suspicion and a cynicism about the efficacy of professional standards implementation:

*I think those initial years when people aren't really sure of what is required, there seems to be a lot of guesswork; there is nothing really set in stone; that confusion can then lead people to probably get a little bit tired and a little bit anxious and they are hoping they are doing the right thing. I think when your focus is on the classroom, to do [professional standards accreditation] alongside, probably makes you question the validity of it. (Renata, St Charity's)*

Together, the responses in this section illustrate that the reactions of teachers to professional standards revolve around the accreditation processes, which is the point at which they perceive that professional standards will impact directly on them and their colleagues. The negativity of those reactions has little to do with the argument about or reflection on the nature of the various teacher professional standards elements, but rather focuses on professional standards implementation, which is seen to be synonymous with the accreditation process. This negativity can be understood as a dimension of weak agency, where teachers perceive that they have little or no voice concerning the implementation of professional standards.

### **5.5.2. Weak public agency**

In expressing their agency, teachers overwhelmingly referred to the AITSL Standards in terms of 'my school' and 'my classroom'. That is, their strong agency, where it exists, is strong personal agency, rather than strong agency that extends to taking professional responsibility and making strong judgements on the wider professional standards agenda. Teachers who, in their interview responses demonstrated strong personal agency also evidenced a weak public agency, as the following examples reveal. Boris is a New Scheme teacher of seven years' experience. Asked if he felt that being a teacher had changed him as a person, he responded:

*It changed me a lot. The type of decisions that I make and the maturity that I have, I've grown up a lot since I started teaching. Being given responsibility changes you. I feel like a person who has a lot of responsibility which I can handle, that I'm a role-model. It changed me a lot. (Boris, St Edbert's)*

Responsibility is expressed here in terms of being a role model to his students. With respect to his relationship to the registration and accreditation agency, however, he expresses disillusionment, confusion and suspicion, describing his relationship to the Institute as a “*rod for my back*” that “*doesn’t improve my teaching*” (Boris, St Edbert’s). Later in the interview, he makes a comment that resonates with the sense of resignation discussed earlier:

*I see a lot of teachers leaving the profession as a result if it continues on this way. You have a lot of people who are well-skilled maybe, not technically, but socially and mentally, earning the same amount or more for less hassle. (Boris, St Edbert’s)*

He concludes with a very negative assessment of the impact of the AITSL Standards in their current implementation, but without offering suggestions for their improvement:

*The Standards have the power to improve teaching. However, the way that they’ve been implemented is demoralising and destructive to the teaching profession. (Boris, St Edbert’s)*

These examples from a single research participant have been an attempt to illustrate how teachers who frequently expressed a strong personal agency conversely also expressed a weak public agency. The use of the term ‘professional’ in association with agency has been deliberately avoided in the current context. While recent literature on teacher professional agency recognises that “agentic teachers perceive themselves as pedagogical experts who have the capability of intentional and responsible management of new learning at both individual *and community* [emphasis added] levels” (Toom, Pyhältö, & O’Connell Rust, 2015, p. 615), there is little if any attempt to separate out the local, individual, classroom and school aspects from the broader community aspects, and an acknowledgement that “the concept of agency is still vague and only few empirical studies have examined teacher or student teacher agency” (Toom, et al., 2015, p. 617). For these reasons, it has been deemed purposeful to avoid the broad term ‘teacher professional agency’ and to contrast strong personal agency with the concept of weak public agency identified here.

### 5.6. CATEGORY OF DESCRIPTION 6: INTENSIFICATION OF WORK

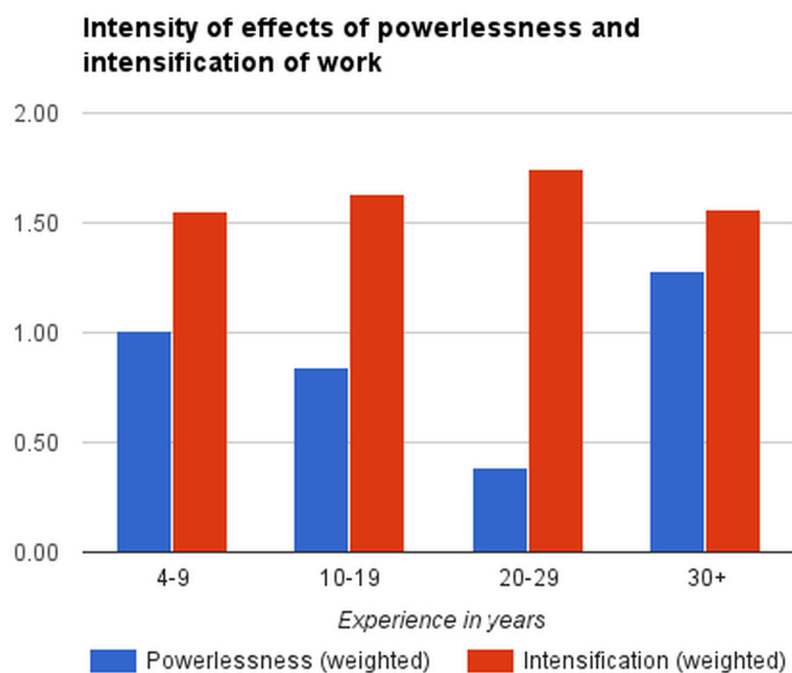
The literature exploring the intensification of work links the phenomenon to an era of ongoing and intense cyclical educational reform (Ball, 1993; Day, 2002), arising out of the crisis culture of continuously seeking improved results spawned by global education testing, a keystone of emergent global educational governance (Kamens, 2013; Lingard & Sellar, 2013; Tröhler, 2015). Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009) note, however, that not all increases in teacher workloads result ipso facto in intensification and its concomitant pressures, stresses, and anxieties, but rather that intensification results from work which places teachers' professional identity at stake. In that regard, the pressure which professionalisation discourses and teacher professional standards reforms place on teacher professional identity is well noted in the literature (Clarke & Moore, 2013; Forde, McMahon, Hamilton, & Murray, 2016; Lilja, 2014; Sachs, 2003b; Tuinamuana, 2011; Webster-Wright, 2009). It is unsurprising then, that the category of the intensification of work is closely linked to the theme of powerlessness in the current research.

The association between powerlessness and the intensification of work can be examined via Figure 5.1. A metric was designed for this graph, following the “intensity of effects” concept utilised by Day and Gu (2010, p. 52). The formula applied for Figure 5.1 is  $(R/(N/T)) * 100$ , where R=the number of references coded at the category of description (‘powerlessness’ and ‘intensification of work’ respectively); N=the total number of research participants in that experience-in-years category; T=the total number of all participants.

This method produced a weighted index of intensity of the awareness of the categories of description being interrogated for each of the experience subgroups, allowing for a valid comparison of the intensity of the awareness of the senses of powerless and the intensification of work by experience.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the growing intensification of work felt by teachers across all experience levels. This intensification suggests that teachers are feeling the pressure of externally

imposed accountability measures. While the intensification of work was increasingly felt in this period, teachers' agency—as measured by a decline in their awareness of their sense of powerlessness—grew for teachers from early to late-mid career. The situation, however, was quite different for the 30+ subgroup; 80% of this subgroup (n=4) made reference to powerlessness and 100% made reference to the intensification of work. The different pattern of the association between powerlessness and the intensification of work for the late career (30+) subgroup can be clearly seen in Figure 5.1, reflecting that group of teachers' declining passion and commitment as they approached retirement. These results are commensurate with those of Day and Gu (2010) who found that a significant subgroup of whom they referred to as 'veteran' teachers struggled to sustain their motivation and cope with change.



*Figure 5.1: Intensity of effects of powerlessness and intensification of work.*

What is most relevant in Day and Gu's (2010) work in the present context is that veteran teachers reported 'policy' as the most significant negative critical influence and the least significant positive critical influence in their working lives; the analogy between policy and

professional standards is not difficult to make. Figure 5.1 encourages the reader to share the view that, given the ageing of the teaching profession (Craven, 2015; Keogh, 2012), the impact of policies such as professional standards on veteran teachers has “profound implications for the standards agenda” (Day & Gu, 2010, p. 124). In the present work, teachers reported that veterans are often highly contributive to the professional development of less experienced teachers. There is a risk that through retirement, cynicism and loss of motivation, experienced teachers are lost to the profession at a time in their career when they have the greatest potential to offer wisdom to their colleagues and their students.

A number of teachers (n=30) expressed their experience, or the experience of those around them, of pressure in the early years of teaching, a reality exacerbated by the additional “burden”, as Sara (St Abigail’s) put it, of completing professional standards accreditation. Burden was sensed generally too by teachers who said such things as “*I loved teaching initially, but I think it’s just exhausting at the moment*” (Claudia, St Fabian’s) and “*sometimes I think that no matter what I do and how hard I work someone still wants something more from me*” (Susan, St Baldwin’s). There was a frequently stated perception that the workload in teaching had increased over time:

*I think the expectations have increased, the demands have increased, but the release time has not changed at all to meet those ever-changing demands of the job... I think there’s definitely a huge increase since I started.* (Sean, St Fabian’s)

Statements such as this were made in the context of semi-structured interviews specifically focused on the introduction of the AITSL Standards and the accreditation processes accompanying them, and it is reasonable to infer that professional standards were seen as a part of the increased demands. As Maree (St Abigail’s) noted, “*The workload is becoming more and more and [professional standards accreditation] would just be one more thing to do.*” Further, the sense of an increasing workload was not perceived to be something that was short-term, but a part of the new ecology of the teaching environment:

*There isn’t going to be any let up in the current work levels that we do... I think it is quite possible there is more support now, but I do*

*think it is a lot busier now than it would have been before; even with a full timetable before I appeared to have time to do things like marking or whatever, but I don't really now that [the AITSL Standards] are happening. (Renata, St Charity's)*

This intensification of work led to a sense of confusion about whether the focus on the core purpose of teaching had been lost:

*Sometimes we make this teaching so complicated—so many things that we have to do—I don't know if it's about the Standards—it's so complicated. We lose sight of just teaching. (Chiara, St Abigail's)*

Or an uncertainty and questioning about teacher priorities:

*I think what often happens is in the busyness of things and in the complexity of things, something [like the AITSL Standards] comes in. It takes a long time... to clear space for it. All of a sudden you have got this really full agenda and then it is left up to teachers to figure out what's priority and what's not and then everyone is complaining that there is not enough time in the day. (Joe, St Baldwin's)*

Comments such as the two extracts here touch on work intensification, causing teachers to question their professional identity, the point raised in the introduction to this subsection. Overall, the category of the intensification of work here can be summarised as teachers perceiving that professional standards are one more thing to do on top of a seemingly ever-increasing number of expectations placed on teachers.

## **5.7. CATEGORY OF DESCRIPTION 7: STATUS OF TEACHERS**

While 'status' was the least prominent of the eight categories of description described here, it was nonetheless sufficiently prominent to warrant inclusion. Its inclusion for discussion is also warranted by the international link between teacher status, professionalism and teacher professional standards, discussed in Section 2.7.4 (p. 63).

Some teachers were convinced of the current low status of teaching, believing that "*there has always been a public perception that teachers perhaps aren't as professional as other*



*professions—they get all those holidays*” (Mary, St Baldwin’s). A view was also expressed that teachers “*are not as well regarded as other professions and in other cultures too*” (Bernard, St Day’s). The following example expresses the view even more resolutely:

*I think it’s a valuable document. I think teachers need it; I think parent and students need to be aware of it, to understand the values of schools and education. Teachers need to be recognised as a profession on par with doctors, lawyers and accountants.* (Una, St Charity’s)

The comparison of teachers to doctors, lawyers and accountants here betrays an underlying belief that teachers’ status is nothing like that of the named professions, despite the fact that AITSL (2014c) documents encourage the comparison.

The AITSL Standards, in this context then, were seen to be a move, “*partly political*” to “*upgrade our standing*” (Bernard, St Day’s). The perception was that professional standards “*are trying to lift the status of teachers*” (Tegan, St Edbert’s), as well as “*the standard of teaching and the public perception of teachers*” (Yago, St Fabian’s) and that professional standards are an essential element of being “*looked at as a serious profession*” (Philomena, St Charity’s). The normalising discourse on professionalism and status was evident in the following comment:

*I think it’s a good thing... I speak from a perspective where my experiences have been very positive ones. It’s important to have a standard for all teachers, because there’s an attitude out there that perhaps the profession is not—it’s certainly not—as highly valued by society as it should be I think. In order to have society value it (and I think it’s changing from stories that I’ve heard in the past), you need to have a set of standards. You need to have everybody working to the same standard in order to lift public perception. I think that this is a way of doing that... I think it’s a good tool to set a foundation for all teachers to work towards specific goals to make our profession recognised and given the worth it deserves.* (Sergius, St Giles’)

The consequential link between teacher professional standards and an increase in status was presented unproblematically despite the apparent failure of such an outcome in jurisdictions

such as the UK and the US, as discussed in Section 2.7.4 (p. 63). Such is the power of normalising discourses and it is to the notion of normalisation in the current research data that we turn to consider the final category of description.

### 5.8. CATEGORY OF DESCRIPTION 8: NORMALISATION

As Maguire (2014) notes, “education policy works by producing sets of ideas that become part of the taken for grantedness of the way things should be” (p. 774). Simply put, this is what is meant by the category of ‘normalisation’, the eighth and last of the categories of description to be considered here. In Foucauldian terms, teacher professional standards are a “documentary apparatus” of broader education policy in Australia, and professional standards might well be understood as a part of “normalising technologies” (Rabinow, 1984, p. 22).

The normalisation phenomenon was evident in the responses of participants in the current study. As one research assistant noted in discussion of the issue at a peer debriefing session, *“they have no problems with the Standards, they are sort of just like apple pie”* (Research Assistant C). This perception was well supported by the comments of participants themselves who said of the AITSL Standards document, *“it seems like very common sense”* (Greg, St Abigail’s) and *“I don’t read the Standards and think ‘oh, we shouldn’t be doing that”* (Nichola, St Charity’s). For less experienced teachers, their exposure to the AITSL Standards at university contributed to the normalisation of teacher professional standards; in the words of Claire (St Abigail’s):

*You are open to them from university, you hear about them, you hear about the accreditation process, so you become more open to this.*  
Claire (St Abigail’s)

Comments, in reference to the AITSL Standards, such as *“yeah, they’re pretty straight forward”*, present the standards as unproblematic for the teaching profession (Chiara, St Abigail’s). Mitch expressed professional standards in a way that imagines no other reality is possible:

*How else is Australia supposed to see whether teachers in schools are actually meeting standards? You've got to have standards. These are it. (Mitch, St Giles)*

Typical comments such as “*I think they are things that teachers have always been doing, they have just become more formalised*” (Nichola, St Charity’s) and “*a lot of it is common sense—a lot of the stuff we do without really having to put an outcome on it or a number on it*” (Terri, St Charity’s), build a conception of professional standards as an unremarkable organ of the modern neoliberal ecology discussed in this study’s Literature Review in Chapter 2. This is very much evident in the following comment from Terri where she incorporates the neoliberal language of ‘audit’ into her response. Talking about the AITSL Standards document, she concludes:

*Yes well that’s what teaching is, really. I just think this is what teaching is; I went to university and we went through every part of this, so now we have come out and it is sort of like in an audit; putting together and proving that you are actually meeting all of these. (Terri, St Charity’s)*

Normalisation of professional standards, however, does not answer a poignant question asked by Gloria regarding what she thought was missing in the AITSL Standards:

*The only thing that I think is missing (I think it’s missing but you can’t put it in a standard) is the whole ‘can you actually teach?’ (Gloria, St Charity’s)*

Gloria’s question, in the terms of this thesis, might be expressed as the question of teachers’ conceptions of the intersubjective space between the quintessential teacher—one imbued with that quality of being able to “actually teach” as Gloria puts it—and the AITSL Standards. This intersubjective space is the outcome space of phenomenography. Having explored eight categories of description to emerge from an examination of the data, namely: quality assurance; quality improvement; contra-professionalism; strong agency; weak agency; intensification of work; status of teachers; and normalisation, the next section of this chapter

will attempt to construct the outcome space following the phenomenographic approach outlined in Section 3.3.3.1 (p. 94).

## **5.9. THE OUTCOME SPACE**

The work in this chapter thus far has identified eight categories of description which describe teachers' reflections on the intersubjective space between teachers and professional standards. The final stage of the first phase data analysis is to identify and map the relationships which exist between these categories of description in order to make a judgement about various teachers' conceptions of professional standards. These relationships are known in phenomenography as the 'outcome space' (Åkerlind, 2012). It might be noted here, to emphasise the methodological point made in Section 3.2.2 (p. 74) and repeated in the introduction to Chapter 5, that the conceptions of the outcome space do not represent the conceptions of individual teachers, but rather are derived from the cutting of the data into pools of meaning that allow for the conceptualisation of the broad but finite ways in which teachers relate to professional standards.

It was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter that two discourses are highlighted here, namely, quality assurance and quality improvement. While acknowledging that this is an artificial binary construction, it was also noted that it is nonetheless the language of the neoliberal education ecology within which teachers live and is the binary construction of much of the literature by AITSL surrounding the AITSL Standards. To test the relationship between quality assurance and quality improvement, NVivo cluster analysis was employed utilising word similarity and Pearson's correlation coefficient. NVivo cluster analysis assists in determining data relationships based on word, node or attribute value similarities (QSR International, 2012). The cluster analysis on nodes, aggregated according to whether they were most like 'quality assurance' or 'quality improvement', revealed that they are diametrically opposed. An identical result was obtained utilising word similarity and Jaccard's correlation coefficient. The diametric opposition of these two categories of description makes them appropriate opposite ends of one of the axes of the emergent outcome space.

A further strong axis between strong and weak agency emerged in the analysis of the data, validated in the discussions at the *Researcher Presentation to Peer Group* (Appendix M). The validity of these axes was strengthened by the Leximancer (A. E. Smith, 2011) conceptual map of the research participants' data illustrated in Figure 5.2.

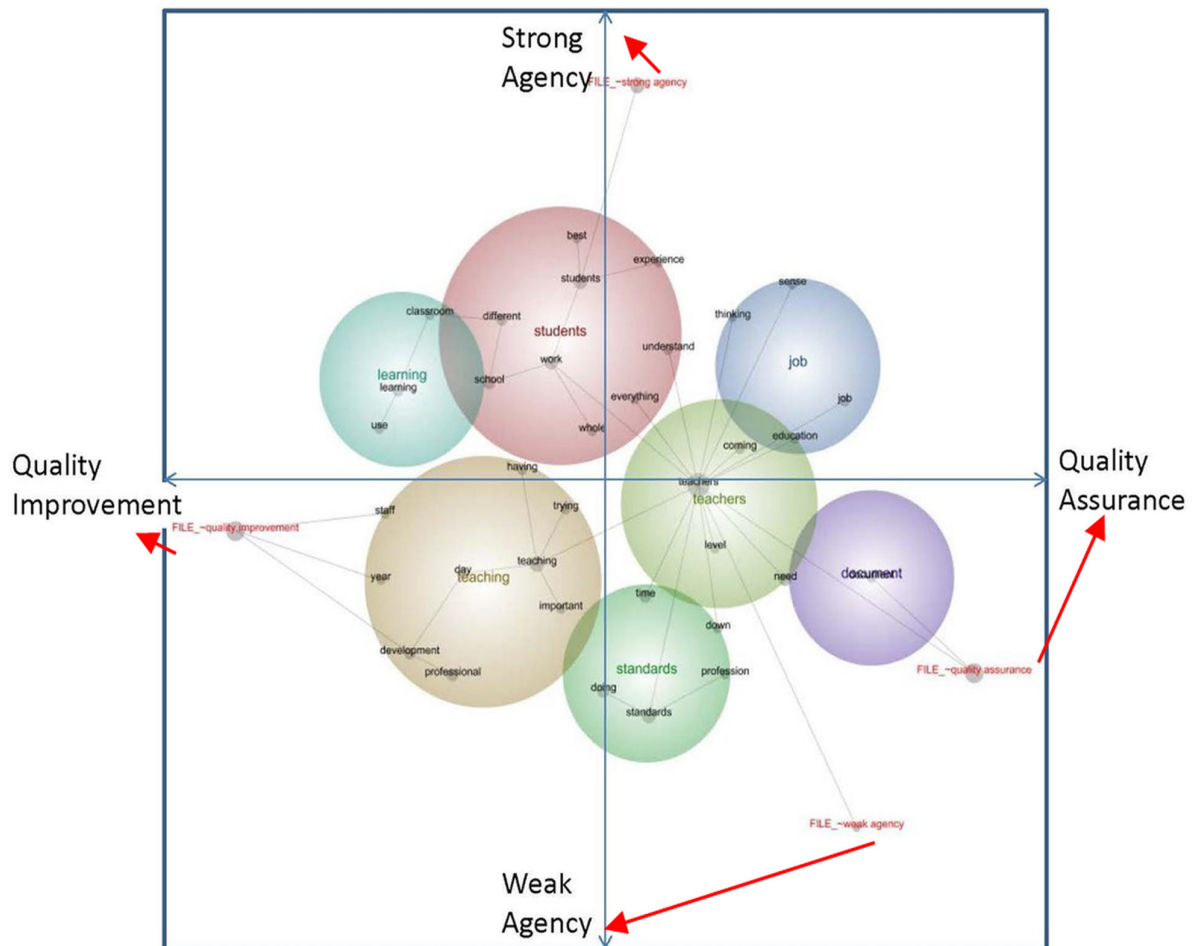
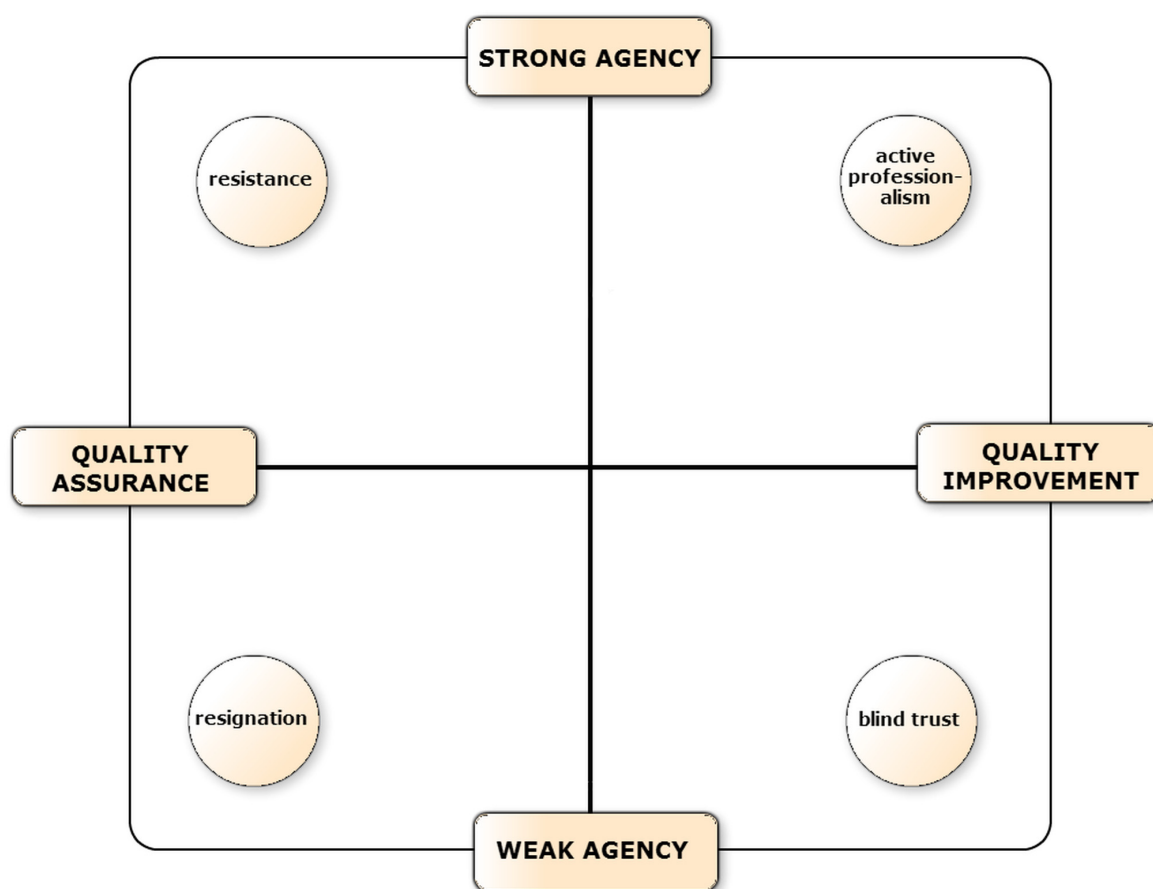


Figure 5.2: Leximancer conceptual map.

Leximancer is Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) that uses semantic and relational qualities of words, discovered within the text itself, to generate a “semantic map” which suggests themes in the data (Smith & Humphreys, 2006, p. 262). The text analysed and illustrated in Figure 5.2 is from four files exported from NVivo, each containing the text references of the four parent nodes ‘quality assurance’, ‘quality improvement’, ‘weak agency’, and ‘strong agency’ respectively. Figure 5.2 spatially illustrates

the semantic relationship of the concepts within each file analysed. As Leximancer provides “unsupervised ontological discovery” (Penn-Edwards, 2010, p. 253; see also A. E. Smith, 2003), it can usefully be used in situations such as this to justify the reliability of the construction of the way in which the parent nodes relate to each other in the outcome space. Consequently, the strong/weak agency axis, when placed at right angles to the quality assurance/quality improvement axis, provides the outcome space presented in Figure 5.3.

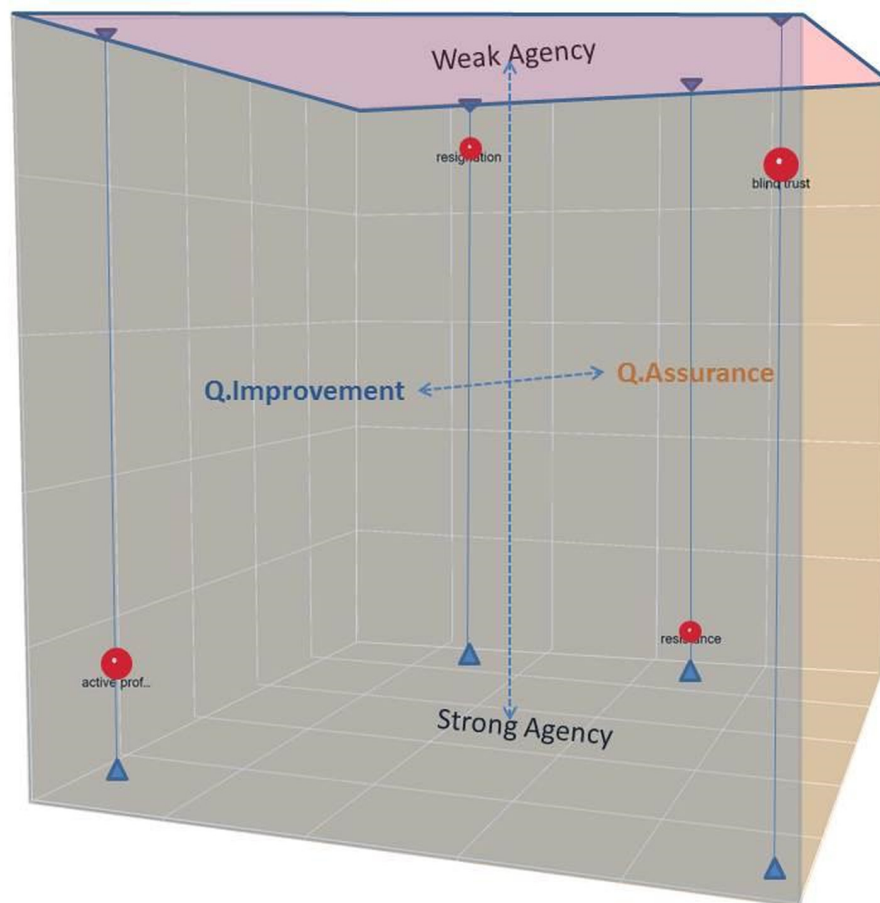


*Figure 5.3: The outcome space for teachers' conceptions of professional standards.*

This outcome space graphically illustrates the relationship between four key ways in which teachers in this study conceived of professional standards. Each of the four quadrants created by the outcome space allows for the placement of an exemplar node which captures the qualities of the conception of professional standards which inhabit that quadrant and this can

also be seen in Figure 5.3. The validity of the selection of each of the four exemplar nodes was confirmed by the NVivo Clustering Analysis Chart presented in Figure 5.4.

The 3D representation of the outcome space evident in Figure 5.4 placed each of the four exemplar nodes in compass point relationship one to another, validating their suitability as guiding notions for a phenomenographical understanding of teachers' conceptions of professional standards. Each of the four conceptions of the outcome space will now be further explored by examining each of the quadrants in turn in detail.



*Figure 5.4: NVivo Clustering Analysis Chart of the outcome space.*

#### **5.9.1. South-west quadrant: quality assurance/weak agency**

'Resignation' is the exemplar node of the south-west quadrant of the outcome space (Figure 5.3, p.156). The south-west quadrant of the outcome space represents a conception of

professional standards which is dominated by a sense that professional standards for teachers are an externally imposed instrument of control, imposed by government as an “ideological tool” (Sachs, 2003b, p. 184). In this conception, teachers are policy subjects (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011b), constructed as the “docile bodies” of education policy (Webb, 2009, p. 26). The power of professional standards as an instrument of control is so strong, in this conception, that teachers, in the face of it, betray an attitude best described by the node ‘resignation’:

*I just find it's going to be very difficult for me but I guess part of the deal. (Roger, St Abigail's)*

*If it's something that we're told to do, we just have to do it. (Charlotte, St Giles)*

These examples illustrate a conception, here labelled as ‘resignation’, which is characterised by compliance with accountability regimes, a direction that Australian education policy has generally encouraged in the last two decades (Mockler, 2013). A “compliance-based, top-down, surveillance approach” was noted as a challenge to implementation by AITSL’s own initial evaluation of the AITSL Standards (Clinton, et al., 2014, p. 12). The conception of professional standards of the south-west quadrant of the outcome space allows for the construction of the teacher as compliant officer of technically rationalised standards, frequently cautioned against in the theoretical literature (Burstow & Winch, 2014; Coffield, 2012; Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Schostak, 2014).

### **5.9.2. South-east quadrant: quality improvement/weak agency**

‘Blind trust’ is the exemplar node of the south-east quadrant of the outcome space (Figure 5.3, p.156). The key distinction between this conception of professional standards and ‘resignation’ is that in addition to discursive practices reflective of high compliance, this conception holds to the conviction that professional standards serve the purpose of guiding and developing current teacher professional learning practices towards greater teacher quality:



*I have to believe that they would not have gone to all the trouble of doing this if there was not a greater purpose for it. Like, I am not the cynical one that thinks, oh this is just somebody doing a job and making us do something extra. I genuinely believe—and I have always believed this—if someone else is making me do something, there must be a benefit for what they are making me do. (Paris, St Fabian’s)*

While this example displays a confident conviction, it is nonetheless characteristically uncritical in its assessment of professional standards, an uncriticality tantamount to blind trust.

### **5.9.3. North-west quadrant: quality assurance/strong agency**

‘Resistance’ is the exemplar node of the north-west quadrant of the outcome space (Figure 5.3, p.156). Resistance in response to the apparatus of neoliberal educational reforms such as professional standards takes the form of teachers’ “uncertainties, discomforts and refusals,” not fully organised or planned, but “a process of struggle” (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 85). In the present study, resistance is connected to a strong awareness of the manipulative power of mechanisms of accountability, as the following example attests:

*I really do believe that this whole standards for teachers is a very positive step but in order for it to work teachers have to understand how it is going to be of value to them and to the students; if they think that it is just about ticking a box or revenue raising or forcing them to work more for nothing, there is going to be continual resistance and it is not going to achieve what it hopes to achieve; you have to have teachers on board. (Paris, St Fabian’s)*

This example references what has been noted in other widely quoted research as “spectacle, or game-playing, or cynical compliance” (Ball, 2003, p. 222). In this conception, accountability power is being resisted—power here understood in the Foucauldian sense of the ability to govern the conduct of others (Foucault, 1988b). In resisting professional standards, teachers are exercising power, albeit weakly expressed. As Foucault also argued, resistance is both bound to power and a form of it (Foucault, 1980a). Resistance does not necessarily empower teachers, because the retreat from authority may see teachers become entrenched in old ways which are themselves earlier instances of normative conformity and not subjected to critical

reflexivity (Stickney, 2012). This third conception of professional standards, while characterised by a sense of the need to counter the forces of accountability power, retains the belief that the teacher is a policy subject upon whom policy is imposed rather than a policy actor who engages with policy in ways which attend to care of the self (Ball, 2013; Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011a; 2011b).

#### **5.9.4. North-east quadrant: quality improvement/strong agency**

‘Active professionalism’ is the exemplar node of the north-east quadrant of the outcome space (Figure 5.3, p.156). Active professionalism<sup>7</sup> is a term coined by Sachs (2003a) imagined with five constituent elements. The first element proposed was teacher as ongoing learner. The second element, participation, anticipated the need for teachers to have opportunities to be active contributors to educational practice and policy determination. The third element urged for the expansion of opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively and in teams, which would in turn feed the fourth element, higher levels of teacher cooperation. The fifth and final element was activism, which Sachs defined as:

...engaging with and responding to issues that relate directly or indirectly to education and schooling. It involves participation, collaboration and cooperation from within and outside the profession. It means standing up for what Fullan (1993) describes as the moral purpose of teaching. (Sachs, 2003a, p. 33)

The conception of professional standards in this quadrant is a step east from the resistance conception. It is hopeful, resourceful, and able to imagine ways in which policy can be creatively employed that enhance what teachers believe to be the core moral purpose of their work. A starting point for the development of this conception was offered by Seraphina:

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7. Sachs (2003a) expands her thesis in the final chapter to define what she calls “the *activist* [emphasis added] teacher professional” (Sachs, 2003a, p. 137ff), but in initially discussing the five elements of this “new form of teacher professionalism”, she takes them to “specify what it means to be a socially responsible and *active* [emphasis added] professional” (p. 30). The latter term has been preferred and will be further developed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 of this thesis.

*Teachers are (a lot of them, actually) highly educated university graduates, very intelligent people. They wouldn't get into university if they weren't smart. We need to use that resource, rather than just say, 'Okay, yeah. Your opinion doesn't matter.' (Seraphina, St Giles' )*

In this conception, teachers see and value the collaborative potential which professional standards might afford them:

*When I talk to another person and I help another person, I can connect what I've done, with what they've done and it's that collegiality; so we're all working together. We have all got this common goal of making sure the kids that leave here are successful and that they are well-grounded—we are not parents, I know—but to make sure that they are pastorally looked after. We've all got the same goal and I think as a group we should work with that and I feel we do that well here already. (Sarah, St Baldwin's)*

Sarah also focused on the moral purpose of supporting the holistic development of young people. The care of the young person and the development of the self is brought together in this final example:

*You are always going to get some people who just get it done and maybe don't buy into the whole significance of it. But I guess that I figured if I have to do this I'm going to at least make it worth my while and making sure that I get something out of it. I don't necessarily think that sending [an accreditation document] in and me receiving a certificate saying that I'm competent really is something that makes me jump up and down with joy. What I'm most happy about the process is that I feel like it gave me a chance to reflect; some time to develop. It has even made me a little bit better teacher. But, yeah, the Certificate doesn't mean much to me. (Roger, St Abigail's)*

In this example, professional standards for teachers are wholly conceived as a reflective tool that enhances teachers' care of the self (Section 4.1.3, p. 117), the prerequisite for care of the other and thus for teaching generally (Wain, 2007).

Gowlett (2015), drawing on the work of Judith Butler (Hey, 2006), uses the term “performative *resignification*” [emphasis added] to convey the notion that, while teachers are

subject to norms and structures beyond their control, it may be possible for them to “inhabit the norms in order to mobilize the rules differently” (Butler, cited in Gowlett, 2015, p. 162). Performative resignification has been described as “Butler’s version of ‘agency’” (Gowlett, 2015, p. 163). This fourth and final conception of the outcome space shares with the north-west quadrant a strong sense of agency; the shift ‘east’ changes the conception from one where the teacher believes himself or herself to be a policy subject to a conception of the teacher as a policy actor (Ball, et al., 2011a; 2011b).

### **5.10. WHAT IS MISSING FROM THE AITSL STANDARDS?**

Asking research participants what was missing from the AITSL Standards was informed by the qualitative technique of interrogating data for silences and absences as much as for what is said (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Moreover, as discussed in Section 4.1.1 (p. 111), searching for absences and silences as well as “local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 83) is a genealogical technique of inquiry from the Foucauldian toolbox that has found a firm place in critical policy analysis (Carabine, 2001; Diem, Young, Welton, Cumings Mansfield, & Lee, 2014). The twist on the usual approach in this research was to interrogate not the silences and absences of the subjects (research participants) but of the object-phenomenon (professional standards) via the views expressed by the subjects (see Figure 3.1, p. 72) and by so doing gain an understanding of the intersubjective space between teachers and professional standards.

The technique produced rich data. Just over 10% of all the interview data references coded in NVivo was generated from the concern of what might be missing from the AITSL Standards. The specific question “What’s new/missing/helpful in the AITSL Standards?” was asked as a part of the *Interview Guide* (Appendix J), however it also needs to be borne in mind that it was only one of 25 distinct questions in the *Interview Guide* over and above straightforward demographic and participant-particulars questions. Thus, the question of ‘What’s missing?’ in the AITSL Standards developed its own relevance in the research data analysis.

In describing the categories of description inherent in the research data, the question of what was missing from the AITSL Standards was touched upon several times, in Section 5.4 (p. 134); Section 5.4.1 (p. 136); and Section 5.8 (p. 152). To recap: teachers placed high value on the importance of relationality in teaching and did not feel that it found full expression in the AITSL Standards; they had an inchoate awareness that there are dispositions that ‘maketh the teacher’—as Gloria (St Charity’s) put it, the stuff of “*can you actually teach*”—but they did not find those things in the AITSL Standards. The AITSL Standards, therefore, while they may measure knowledge and skills of the teacher—things that matter—they do not measure everything that matters: “*There is so much that’s not on these pages*” (Kristen, St Charity’s). This sense was also expressed by Carmel. She was critical of some pre-New Scheme teachers resistance to change, but she admired the elusive exemplary teacher quality of their dispositions in the classroom:

*I have sat in their classes and I have watched them and I have worked with them, I have team taught with them and they just have this vast array; just the way they challenge the students and their interactions with them and all those things, even when they are not that charismatic in the classroom, I find that they just have this—they understand. They just see it and they understand it, they are so switched on. (Carmel St Fabian’s)*

When asked what is missing in the AITSL Standards she noted:

*I don’t know if they could put it in writing, could they? The natural, organic stuff that happens in the classroom? You couldn’t, you just can’t; what teachers do in the classroom, whether you are New Scheme or not, I just don’t think you could put that into words. (Carmel St Fabian’s)*

This last quote emphasises, further to Gloria’s comment requoted above, the difficulty that teachers themselves saw in capturing what they felt were the most important parts of *being* a teacher, which will be termed here as ‘teacher dispositions’. Some research has sought to categorise the special qualities of the expert teacher in the epistemological domain, as “craft knowledge” (Ayres, Sawyer, & Dinham, 2004, p. 145), “dispositional intelligence” (Thornton, 2006, p. 56), Aristotle’s “*phronesis*” (Beckett & Hager, 2002, p. 173), otherwise known as

“practical wisdom” (Onderwijsraad, 2013, p. 32). Other studies touch on some element or other of teacher dispositions, referring to them as values (Chong & Cheah, 2009; Hay McBer, 2000), attributes (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, 2007), characteristics (Strong, Gargani, & Özge Hacifazlıoğlu, 2011), virtues (Beaton, 2010), moral purposes (Day, 2004) or personal qualities (Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011) in the affective domain. What is particular to the current argument is that these special qualities that were felt to separate the exemplary from the non-exemplary teacher were in the ignored ontological, not the epistemological domain—what Dall’Alba and Sandberg (2006) call “embodied understanding of practice” (p. 395) and Gorodetsky and Barak (2016) call “becomings” (p. 85). Understanding teacher dispositions as elements of the ontological domain conveys much more strongly the concept that they are quintessential to the personhood of the teacher. “Teachers are indeed people. Who you are is how you teach” (McCulla, 2012, p. 3).

Gore, Ladwig and King (2004) note the “historical tendency to associate good teaching with individuals” (p. 3). They argue that the tendency to place quality teaching within “embodied individuals” (p. 3) mitigates against the reception and adoption of new, quality teaching practices which are premised on the view that all teachers have the capacity to teach well. The assumption of Gore, Ladwig and King (2004) is that where a view prevails that quality teaching is quintessential to the embodied individual, change in practice will be resisted, whereas in situations where teaching is seen as a practice, change processes are “more likely to engage teachers in serious processes of reflection and refinement of what they do” (Gore, et al., 2004, p. 3). Gore, Ladwig and King’s (2004) theorising on this point is not borne out in the high performing system of schools that is the case study for this thesis, a system in which innovation, dynamism and acceptance of change are well noted (Turkington, 2010). That quality teaching is seen to reside in the body of the teacher in such a high performing school system serves to emphasise the importance of the ontology of the teacher which is borne out in this section.

Two hundred and six node references drawn from a majority (n=62) of the research participants were generated from the interview data relating to teacher dispositions, organised under 13 separate nodes. These nodes representing the variety of dispositions that teachers believe to be absent from the AITSL Standards that were discerned in the data were:

- relationality;
- passion;
- vocation and commitment;
- empathy;
- altruism and moral purpose;
- patience;
- love of children;
- adaptability and fine-grained professional judgement;
- openness to others;
- authenticity;
- personality;
- collegiality;
- love of learning.

The emergence of these teacher dispositions of itself is unremarkable—a meta-study by Day and Gu (2010) affirmed their importance for quality teaching as had much early studies before that (OECD, 1994, cited in Ayres, et al., 2004). A selection of exemplar comments from the data which illustrate the teacher dispositions listed can be found in Appendix S. What is significant to note is that they represent a sample of mutable *values* that are quite distinct from the focus of the AITSL Standards on *knowledge and skills*. Their mutability is important to note, to distinguish them from lists of immutable personal attributes which have been criticised by Scott and Dinham (2008) for influencing teachers' mindsets and being obstacles to professional growth. The critical insight here is that while the AITSL Standards may adequately cover the epistemological dimension of what a teacher should know and be able to do, oft repeated by their advocates (Ingvarson, 1998; 2014; Ingvarson & Hattie, 2008; Pegg, McPhan, Mowbray, & Lynch, 2011), they do not address the ontological dimension of the human person that the teacher is in the act of *being* and *becoming*.

The national discussion paper *Standards of Professional Practice* is referred to in Section 1.2.2.2 (p. 24) and Section 1.2.2.3 (p. 25). More than 10 years before the publication of the AITSL Standards, *Standards of Professional Practice* had put forward the view that professional standards should identify what a teacher should “know, understand, do *and value* [emphasis added]” (Mackay, et al., 2000, p. 10). *Standards of Professional Practice* recognised the key point that is being emphasised in this thesis, that “teachers teach according to their ‘being’: who teachers are is absolutely the foundation of how they teach” (Mackay, et al., 2000, p. 10). It is telling that *Standards of Professional Practice* quoted Gerard Manly Hopkins’ poetry immediately after making this point about the ontology of teachers. In the current neoliberal ecology of education, referencing poetry to make a serious evidentiary point is unsayable.

At some point, the insight of *Standards of Professional Practice* was lost and needs to be reclaimed. The focus on the epistemological dimension, knowledge and skills, was evidently considered adequate for the AITSL Standards by its designers, but teachers sense that the most important piece of the puzzle—the ontological dimension—is almost if not completely absent. These matters are important in a consideration of the third research sub-question, namely: How do professional standards impact on the professional that teachers become?



## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This chapter will consider a collection of propositions which proceed from the findings of the research discussed in Chapter 5. These propositions will form the basis of the conclusions and recommendations which are the subject of Chapter 7.

### **6.1. CONCERNING QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT DISCOURSES**

The first proposition concerns the discourses of quality assurance and quality improvement. The proposition is that the quality assurance discourse dominates the quality improvement discourse. It is appropriate to commence the discussion with a consideration of these discourses, given their prominence in the research data and as themes in the literature, discussed in Section 2.5.1 (p. 43) and Section 2.6.1 (p. 46). A key finding in the review of the literature was that the purposes of professional standards for teachers, as chiefly either an accountability measure or as a guide for the professional development of teachers was and continues to be deeply contested; on that matter, this proposition will make a judgement about teachers' conception of professional standards.

#### **6.1.1. The dominance of the quality assurance discourse over the quality improvement discourse**

As was noted in Section 1.2 (p. 4), the quality teaching agenda has driven the development of professional standards not only in Australia but internationally. Section 1.2.2 (p. 19) further noted that the quality teaching agenda continues to be contested ground between the desire for quality assurance and the desire for quality improvement. Section 2.5.3 (p. 45) discussed policymakers' development of a discourse of balanced 'pressure and support' as essential to improving teacher quality. Barber (2010) offers the view that poor performing systems need the high pressure of mandated reforms, whereas good systems need high support to have symbiotic energy unleashed to become great ones (Barber, 2010). This of course raises the question of the appropriate balance between the pressure and its incumbent accountabilities on the one hand, and support (and its focus on improvement, capacity building and professional development) for Australian teachers on the other hand. Research which has led to a discourse

of the centrality of the teacher, such as the work of Hattie (2009; 2012), has led to a focus of the pressure and support being placed directly on the individual teacher, rather than the school or the system (Connell, 2009; Larsen, 2010). This reality should be acknowledged in any discussion of the improvement in teacher quality.

In discussing the centrality of the teacher for the improvement of student outcomes, Hattie (2015a) emphasises the need for high levels of support and opportunities for teacher collaboration in the Australian context. Yet the danger that professional standards “will become objects of compliance rather than development” (J. Nelson, 2013, p. 22) seems a prescient warning in the light of the findings of this research. It is not an either or choice, yet teachers in the current study see the quality assurance discourse as heavily outweighing the discourse of quality improvement. While Ingvarson (2005) believes that teacher professional standards based on professional knowledge are sufficient to “enhance accountability within the profession by clarifying reasonable targets for professional development” (p. 358), teachers balked at the AITSL Standards precisely because professional knowledge was not the element considered by them to be most critical to success as a teacher.

## **6.2. CONCERNING TEACHER NEGATIVITY**

The second proposition concerns teacher negativity and proceeds from the first. The proposition is that teacher negativity regarding teacher professional standards is linked to the dominance of the quality assurance discourse. This section will discuss how teacher negativity about professional standards and a dominant discourse of externally imposed accountability feed one another in ways which do not enhance the likelihood of teachers making professional standards central to their self-conception as professionals.

### **6.2.1. Teacher negativity regarding professional standards is linked to the dominance of the quality assurance discourse**

The research data showed negativity to professional standards expressed across the experience ranges for teachers, although slightly more for New Scheme teachers with direct experience of

professional standards accreditation processes. The greatest negativity from New Scheme teachers regarding the accreditation process was that they paid a registration fee to the registration and accreditation agency and saw no benefit for their investment. Negativity extended to the pre-New Scheme teachers also:

*It's the older teachers who are more worried, who say it's just the beginning. I personally have begun to think: What am I paying the \$100 for? I don't know what I'm paying it for, but at the beginning I always thought: Okay, well, just pay my \$100, and that's okay. It's just another thing that—things just don't seem to add up. Why would I be paying a \$100 for something that's a rod for my back? It doesn't improve my teaching. (Boris, St Edbert's)*

Teachers made the link between teacher registration fees and the AITSL Standards mechanisms and bureaucracy but did not perceive a comparable link between fees and investment in teacher quality improvement. Teachers looking to the future of accreditation at the higher, voluntary, 'Highly Accomplished' and 'Lead' teacher levels also expressed negative views about the cost involved in this process:

*There is a lot of negativity about, where are we going to get the time to do a lot of this stuff? A lot of the negativity comes from around the aspect of costs – because we know that the New Scheme teachers are paying a yearly membership fee and from what they tell us they don't get anything for that membership fee. They don't feel as though they are getting anything for it. And then those of us, like myself, who are really keen to demonstrate lead teacher or some of the higher levels of the platform or the proforma or whatever you want to call it. We have been told that in order to demonstrate that, you have to pay a fee to demonstrate that...<sup>8</sup> So a lot of the negativity about it comes from looking at the negatives rather than looking at what it actually does for our profession. Individually, it is a huge pain, it is going to take a lot of time, but it is also really rewarding as well. So I think in order to make people feel more positive about it, I think we need to spend more time in school, at a school level, breaking it down and maybe dispelling some of the myths associated with it. Like what exactly do these New Scheme teachers get for the fee that they are paying? Because what they are telling us is that they get nothing. They are telling us that they don't get support from anyone, they don't get*

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8. At the time of writing, the fee to apply for accreditation in NSW is \$605 for Highly Accomplished and \$715 for Lead (BOSTES, 2015).

*professional reading stuff to do, they don't get anything for their money. So they see it as kind of an imposed union and imposed fee with no benefit to them at all. (Paris, St Fabian's)*

The Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards New South Wales (BOSTES) website states that fees support “accreditation and ongoing professional development” (BOSTES, 2015); teachers saw only the first part and not the second part of this. The strong connection for teachers between the Institute of Teachers (now BOSTES) and accountability bureaucracy fostered a strong negativity to professional standards. The linking of professional standards to teacher pay scales, outlined in Section 3.6 (p. 106), concluded after the interviews for this research took place although it was mooted and discussed by research participants at the time. The discussion generated by salary negotiations served to harden teachers' views about the dominance of the quality assurance agenda of the AITSL Standards, overshadowing teachers' conception of professional standards as a professional development, capacity building tool.

What are the effects of teacher negativity about professional standards? An example is the discourse of derision in Section 5.1 (p. 126) which was attributed in the data to more than half of the research participants. The prominence of this discourse, particularly favoured among politicians, leads to a conclusion that the key purpose of the AITSL Standards is to address issues of teacher underperformance. It is difficult to imagine that such a conception predisposes teachers to take on the active professionalism of the north-east quadrant of the outcome space (Figure 5.3, p. 156). Teachers' perceptions are that quality assurance is the heavily weighted discourse and there is virtually no emphasis on quality improvement in the implementation of the AITSL Standards. This imbalance threatens the likelihood of these professional standards making a contribution to the profession.

### **6.3. CONCERNING TEACHER AGENCY**

The third proposition concerns teacher agency. The proposition is that teachers' weak public agency with respect to professional standards is expressed as a form of powerlessness. Strong

and weak agency feature on the vertical axis of the outcome space theorised for this study; this section will show that weak agency is linked to teachers' sense that the dispositions which they value as critically important to their quality as professionals are not recognised. It will also be shown that strong agency is expressed in the way teachers' enact, rather than implement, the AITSL Standards. The section will then link the importance of teachers' enactment strategies and dispositions in a step to building a case for the importance of teacher dispositions as a key dimension of teacher professionalism.

### **6.3.1. Teachers' weak public agency with respect to professional standards is expressed as a form of powerlessness**

The findings of this research reveal that the notion of agency is nuanced. At one end of the spectrum, teachers expressed a strong personal agency. Teachers sensed that they possessed a strong capacity to influence the students directly in their care and to be an influence for good in their local school community. Teachers also saw, in the teachers with whom they work, that this capacity grows with experience. At the other end of the spectrum, they expressed a weak public agency with respect to the broader educational discourse that is focused at education district and government level.

Teachers had an inchoate sense that what defined their strong personal agency was not to be found in the AITSL Standards. This finding validates the perspective of Schön who writes: "It is as though the practitioner says to his academic colleague, 'While I do not accept your view of knowledge, I cannot describe my own'" (2005, p. viii). A set of mutable qualities, *have* been identified in this study, expressed as 'teacher dispositions', and are discussed in Section 5.10 (p. 164). Nonetheless, teachers' inability to be able to expertly articulate what was defining of teacher quality for them but was not in the AITSL Standards nullifies their capacity to influence policy direction at the district or government level because they do not have the language for it. This point found strong expression in the research data as a form of powerlessness. It is not resistance, itself a form of power; it is an anxiety about the direction that the defining of their work has taken and about which they are uncertain. In a peer

debriefing session, reflecting on New Scheme teachers experiences of professional standards accreditation processes, one of the research assistants put it this way:

*They are powerless because they have to do it. 'Anxiety' is a word that's used, 'tension' is a word that's used, and 'fear' is a word that's used. There is a bit of a fear factor there, and that brings in that they are powerless. They have got to do this otherwise they're not going to be registered as a teacher. Now where that comes from? Well, it comes certainly from the Institute. (Research Assistant A)*

Another one of the research assistants expressed a perception of what had been shared by more experienced teachers who had not yet engaged directly with the AITSL Standards but against which they would soon be accredited:

*I think a lot of the Old Scheme teachers are quite insulted that the high ideals that they have always had are suddenly to be reduced to that! I am not going there! It is a downward thing. The department or whoever seems to feel as though this is something you want to aspire to. That is the disempowerment I am sure. (Research Assistant C)*

These reflections affirm the view that teachers' weak public agency is linked to the disconnect between their unarticulated sense of what really matters in teaching and what they read in the AITSL Standards. That is not to say that teacher agency was absent in the research data; while teachers' agentic power was weak in the public sphere, it was strong in the personal sphere. This strong personal agency which contrasts with weak public agency is the subject of the discussion in the next section.

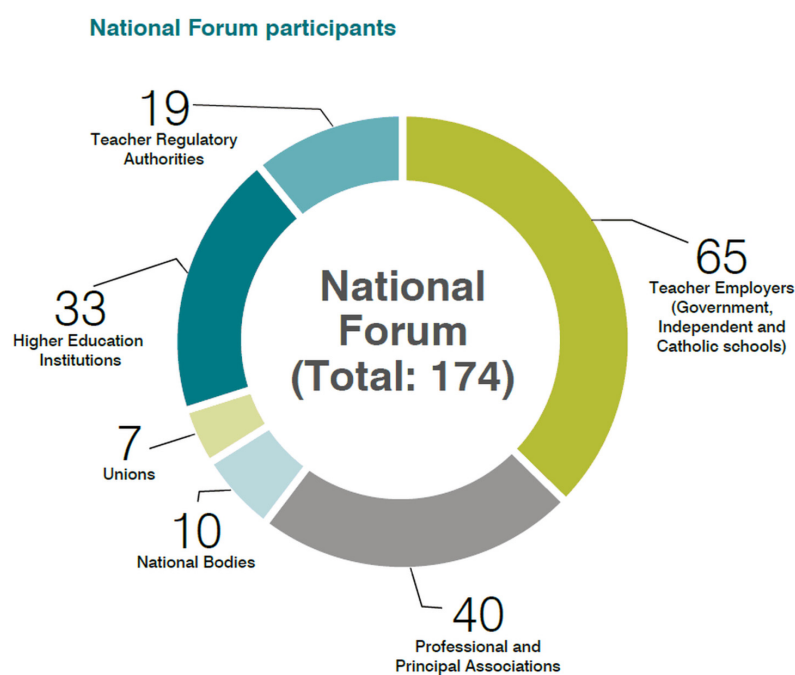
### **6.3.2. Teachers' enactment strategies are a dimension of their strong personal agency**

Teachers most clearly expressed their agentic power through expression of their connection with their students, colleagues, leaders and parents at the local level. When referring to the AITSL Standards as they impacted on this local sphere of influence, a picture emerged of how teachers enacted, rather than implemented, the AITSL Standards (Section 5.4.1, p. 136).

Enactment included teachers' constructions in all of their guises; in the way that they assembled reports to suit the needs of those to whom they reported; in what they ignored or

emphasised; in the way they transformed the terminology of what they were doing to suit the AITSL Standards or superimposed the terminology of the AITSL Standards on their work to make it fit.

Teachers' enactments were important to them; less important was delivering the implementation intentions of policymakers. A part of the value of the current research is that it takes seriously "policy enactments in and around schools" that are usually "marginalised or go unrecognised" (Ball, et al., 2012, p. 2). An example of the under-representation of teachers' voices in the professional standards debate is demonstrated in Figure 6.1. In the AITSL national forum meetings and workshops that took place over the course of June–August 2013, in which 174 stakeholders were consulted about the AITSL Standards, not a single person was a classroom teacher (AITSL, 2014d). Typically, policy evaluation, and policy implementation are the focus of policy analysis and not the transmogrifications of policy that happen under teachers' enactment of it. Capturing teachers' enactments of professional standards is important because, despite its importance to professional standards policy research, it has been under-researched.



*Figure 6.1: National Forum participants June–August 2013. Source: AITSL, 2014d, p. 6.*

While the 71 interviews with teachers for this research were ostensibly exploring teachers' perceptions of professional standards, the questions about professional standards caused teachers to reflect on what they saw as the marks of their own professionalism. A consistent refrain was that their professionalism doesn't come from *out there* but from *in here*, most particularly fostered by the culture of the school in which they worked and in the teacher dispositions which they expounded. The AITSL Standards were "*putting a name to something you already do*" (Valeria, St Charity's), but even so, "*there is more to the teaching profession than just what's in the booklet [AITSL Standards]*" (Carmel, St Fabian's). The connection can be seen here between teachers' strong personal agency, in the form of their enactment of professional standards and their conception of the ideal teacher, in the form of the teacher dispositions enumerated in Section 5.10 (p. 164). Supporting teachers to move more fully into the strong agency/quality improvement quadrant of the outcome space needs to take seriously both teachers' policy enactment strategies and the importance of teacher dispositions in their conceptions of teacher professionalism.

#### **6.4. CONCERNING THE ONTOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

The fourth proposition concerns the ontological dimension of teachers work in relation to professional standards. The proposition is that the AITSL Standards are missing a human element at the heart of being a good teacher. The AITSL Standards, given their similarity to professional teaching standards in other jurisdictions and from which they are derived (Bourke, 2011; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009), are an exemplar of the problematic absence of the ontological dimension of teaching from teaching standards generally.

##### **6.4.1. The AITSL Standards are missing a human element at the heart of being a good teacher**

Teachers' strong sense of personal agency was frequently expressed as a view that the AITSL Standards are missing a human element at the heart of being a good teacher. This is an important finding as it lends empirical support to non-empirical perspectives oft discussed in teaching, that "we teach who we are" (Palmer, 1998–99, p. 10). It also strengthens the



assertion in recent research that professional standards for teachers such as those in operation in the UK and Australia are overly-reliant on technical competencies, ignoring attributes in the affective domain (Clarke & Moore, 2013; Monteiro, 2015; Newby, 2007; Ryan & Bourke, 2013; Tickle, 2005; Watson & Drew, 2015).

As noted in Section 2.5.2 (p. 44), ontological questions associated with teacher professionalism are largely ignored in the literature. The focus, in the development of the AITSL Standards, on what a teacher should know and be able to do, has omitted the significant question of who the teacher *becomes* in the course of committing to the community whom they serve, their school leaders, their colleagues, their students and their parents. This is not to discount the importance of what teachers will teach, or how or why, but to address the mostly unasked question ‘who’:

Who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form—or deform—the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world? How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes? (Palmer, 2007, p. 4)

The absence of the ontological dimensions of teaching from the AITSL Standards themselves is wholly consistent with the preoccupation with technical abilities in the contemporary neoliberal educational ecology (Palmer, 2003; 2008). In ignoring the dispositions which teachers hold to be central to their work, an ontological shift occurs exerting pressure onto teachers, asserting limits to what they can *be*, contributing to their sense of powerlessness. As we have seen, teachers resist this ontological shift through their enactments in response to the AITSL Standards.

### **6.5. CONCERNING TEACHER DISPOSITIONS**

The fifth proposition concerns teacher dispositions and the vexed question of ‘What’s missing?’ from the AITSL Standards. The proposition is that what is missing from the Standards is best expressed as a collection of teacher dispositions. A selection of exemplar

comments from the data which illustrate these dispositions can be found in Appendix S. The question is vexed because, as outlined in Section 5.10 (p. 164), teachers who see their professional identity in terms of a range of teacher dispositions, are challenged by the definition of ‘quality teacher’ inherent in the AITSL Standards which omits those dispositions. It will be shown that the findings of the current research add empirical support to theoretical critiques of professional standards for teachers that make similar claims. Finally, this section proposes that ways need to be found to acknowledge the importance of teacher dispositions in any construction of the quality teacher.

#### **6.5.1. What is missing from the Standards is best expressed as a collection of teacher dispositions**

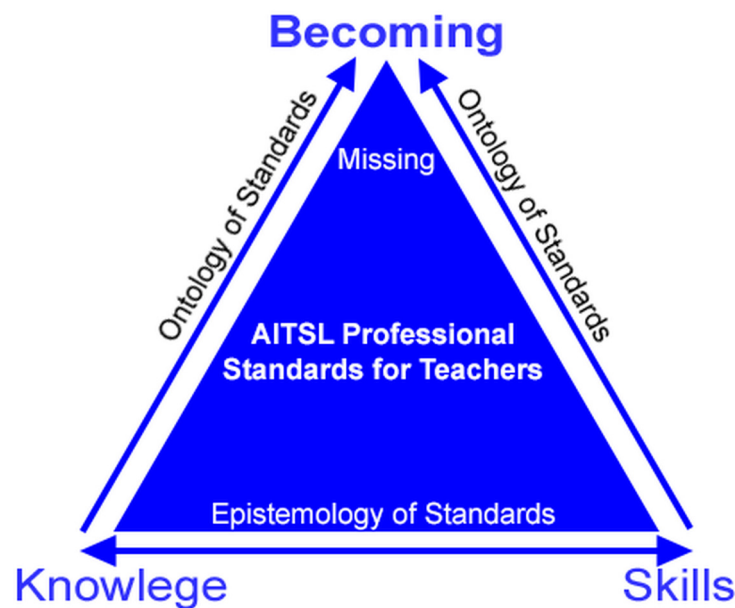
The omission of qualities such as relationality, empathy, commitment, passion and judgement has frequently been theorised in policy analysis of teacher competencies assemblages. For example, in discussing preservice teacher education competency prescriptions in the UK and around the Western world, Maguire (2014) writes that:

The emphasis, more and more, is on successful in-school experience, technical skills such as teaching literacy through centrally prescribed methods, behaviour management, familiarity with testing regimes, etc. Other matters, for example, those of commitment, values and judgement are frequently sidelined, made optional or simply omitted. (Maguire, 2014, p. 779)

The current study makes a contribution to the field by lending empirical data to verify this claim from the perspective of the teacher. That is to say, what is claimed by Maguire is felt on the ground by the teacher. The current study also strengthens the case made by Day and Gu (2010), on the basis of a study of the lives of 18 teachers, that the qualities and commitments named here are generally missing in teacher professional standards and their concomitant policies. Figure 6.2 graphically illustrates the ontological dimension as the missing element of instrumentalist professional standards.

This research also lends further empirical weight to the claim that good teachers are hard pressed to explain what it is that makes them good teachers (Scott & Dinham, 2008). Making

teachers' weakly articulated ontological dimensions of teaching more explicit, through what has been termed in this study as 'teacher dispositions', is precisely what is missing from the AITSL Standards. The AITSL Standards reflect the knowledge (head) and the skills (hands) of the quality teacher, but do not account well enough for the personhood or heart (McCulla, 2012; Palmer, 2007; Vallance, 2003) of the quality teacher. To extend the metaphor of Figure 6.2, teacher dispositions, representing the ontological dimension of teaching, are the third leg of the stool.



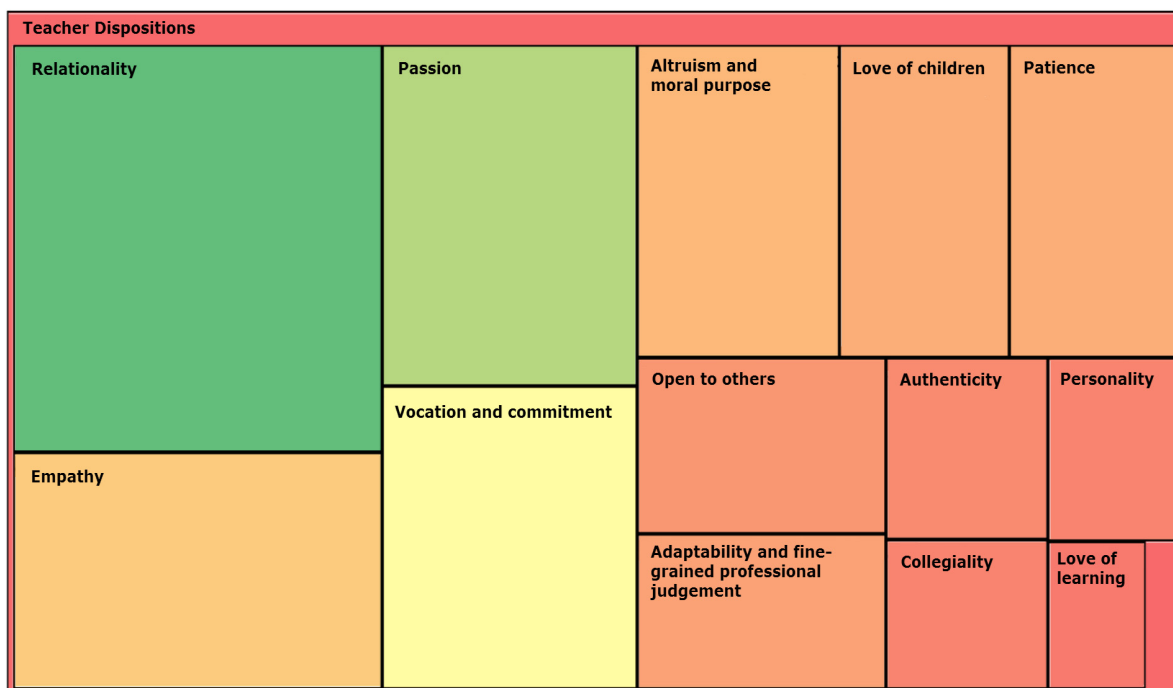
*Figure 6.2: The missing ontological dimension of teacher professional standards.*

Figure 6.3 graphically illustrates the teacher dispositions identified in the current research data. The relative size of the squares in the graphic indicates the comparative frequency of coding for each of the nodes listed. While the importance of each of these teacher dispositions could be debated, it is noteworthy that relationality—knowing, getting along with and understanding one's students well—featured most prominently. This finding adds weight to the research reported by Berliner (2004), who found that expert teachers were no better than novice teachers at gauging student comprehension based on non-verbal cues when faced with a class of strangers—it was only when expert teachers knew their students well, relationally,

that their teacher expertise made a difference. The AITSL Standards do indeed exhort teachers to “know students and how they learn” (BOSTES, 2015a, Standard 1.1, p.4); they do not, however, acknowledge the ontological dimension that allows teachers to do that in an exemplary way.

Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) observed that “many attempts to quantify and measure teachers’ professional practice have fallen into the trap of privileging the easy to measure but trivial over the difficult to measure but important” (p. 60). Teachers see that what is being measured in professional standards accreditation—matters of technical compliance—is proof of what matters to the AITSL Standards accreditors and the AITSL Standards themselves.

**Nodes compared by number of items coded**



*Figure 6.3: NVivo Tree Map—teacher dispositions.*

In summary, the research data of the current study demonstrates that the views and perspectives of teachers are radically different from those of policymakers and administrators

on the issue of teacher professional standards and what counts as quality in teaching. Mechanisms or perspectives are required which allow teachers to redress the imbalance in the AITSL Standards between the need for quality assurance, a technical necessity, and the desire for quality improvement, a human creative yearning (Chomsky & Foucault, 1971/2006). The latter is difficult to measure but that does not mean that it should be ignored (Schön, 2005). In his wide-ranging study of the modern Western standards phenomenon, Busch (2011) cautions that standards “appear to do violence to persons” when they “employ overly narrow measures that direct attention away from other important but difficult to measure aspects of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 232). The danger is that this violence lurks for teachers with the AITSL Standards in their current form.

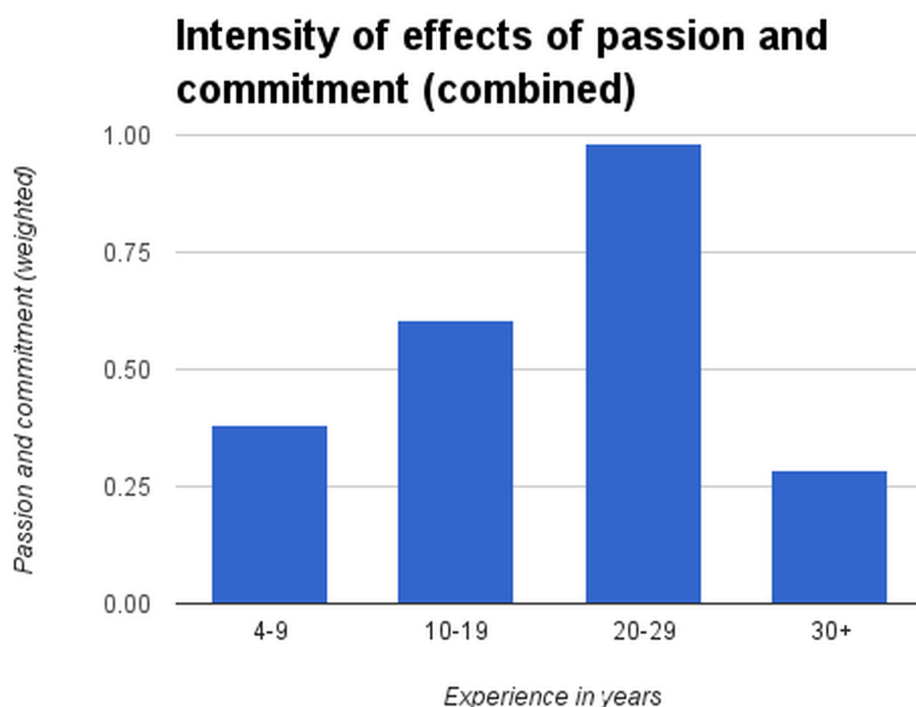
## **6.6. CONCERNING TEACHER EXPERIENCE**

The sixth proposition concerns teacher experience. The proposition is that there is a variety of teachers’ views about the AITSL Standards that divides along experience lines. It was noted in Section 5.6 (p. 147) that the intensity of teachers’ awareness of powerlessness and the intensification of work was associated with levels of experience. In the light of this, the question of the importance of experience deserves further exploration in the discussion of teachers’ conceptions regarding professional standards. This section will explore the connection between teacher experience and teaching mastery. Passion and commitment will be identified as the sustaining motivational factors for maintenance of exemplary teaching into late career and patterns from the data which divide along experience lines will be identified and theorised. It will be indicated that passion and commitment are critical to the formation and strengthening of teachers’ professional identity and are contributive to teacher agency.

### **6.6.1. There is a variety of teachers’ views about the AITSL Standards that divides along experience lines**

The work of Berliner (2004) attests to the hypothesis that is further validated by this research, namely, that mastery of teaching is closely associated with experience, but experience alone

does not guarantee that a teacher will be an exemplary one. This view is supported by Day and Gu (2010), who caution against aligning exemplary teaching with experience alone. In order to be exemplary, teachers need the requisite “knowledge, skills *and dispositions* [emphasis added]” (Day & Gu, 2010, p. 177). Day and Gu (2010) also reject the suggestion that there is a linear, staged development of teacher expertise that progresses with each successive year of experience. Rather, they suggest, a teacher’s passion and commitment provides the resilience that is needed to manage the intensification of work associated with policy pressures like professional standards, allowing one to teach at one’s best. This notion is tested in Figure 6.4.



*Figure 6.4: Intensity of effects of passion and commitment (by experience).*

The intensity index in Figure 6.4 was arrived at using the same formula explained in Section 5.6 (p. 147), in reference to Figure 5.1 (p. 148). The coded references for the NVivo nodes ‘passion’ and ‘commitment’ were combined in accordance with Day and Gu’s (2010) and others (McCulla, 2012) closely associated use of the terms. These factors allow us to see a pattern of the intensity of the effects of passion and commitment in relation to teachers’

experience subgroups. Closely resembling the pattern of Figure 5.1, it can be seen that the passion and commitment of veteran teachers is sorely tested, reinforcing the point made in Section 5.6 (p. 147) that policy pressures such as professional standards will diminish rather than support late-career teachers, a pressing issue with an ageing teacher workforce.

For the maintenance of more experienced teachers' motivation to teach consistently well, Day and Gu (2010) concluded that among other factors "professional identity was crucial to their sense of professionalism" which is intimately connected to their "sense of professional competence and agency" (p. 110). Hulme and Menter (2014) go further, suggesting that "recent research has pointed to the discontinuous, unstable and recursive nature of professional learning and identity formation" (p. 673), thus emphasising the importance of reinforcing the sense of teacher agency at every career point. It follows that a form of professional standards that fails to resonate with teachers' experience of what makes the exemplary teacher will diminish rather than contribute to professional identity and agency. This view is further supported by Figure 6.5, which replicates the formula used for determining the intensity of effects in Figures 5.1 (p. 148) and 6.4. The difference between Figure 6.4 and Figure 6.5 is that the latter is divided by New Scheme/pre-New Scheme teachers rather than by experience subgroups. The intensity of effects of passion and commitment for pre-New Scheme teachers were nearly double that of the New Scheme teachers. This suggests that as teachers gain experience, they increasingly come to appreciate the importance of passion and commitment as essential contributors to a strong professional identity. As was noted in Section 5.4 (p. 164) however, they did not see passion and commitment reflected in the AITSL Standards. These are powerful insights from classroom teachers that may distinctly differ from the views of school and district educational leaders.

It would be remiss at this point not to note the importance of context. This point was well noted by Sean when he commented that:

*A good teacher in one school could be a completely different style of teacher in another school. I think it would be hard to define what a good teacher is in a different school with a different environment,*

*different socioeconomic background, different culture. If I'm a really good teacher at this school, the strategies I use here, and my manner—if I put that in another school—that could be completely useless in another school. I don't think there's a set formula to look at when you're teaching students. It varies from class to class. (Sean, St Fabian's)*

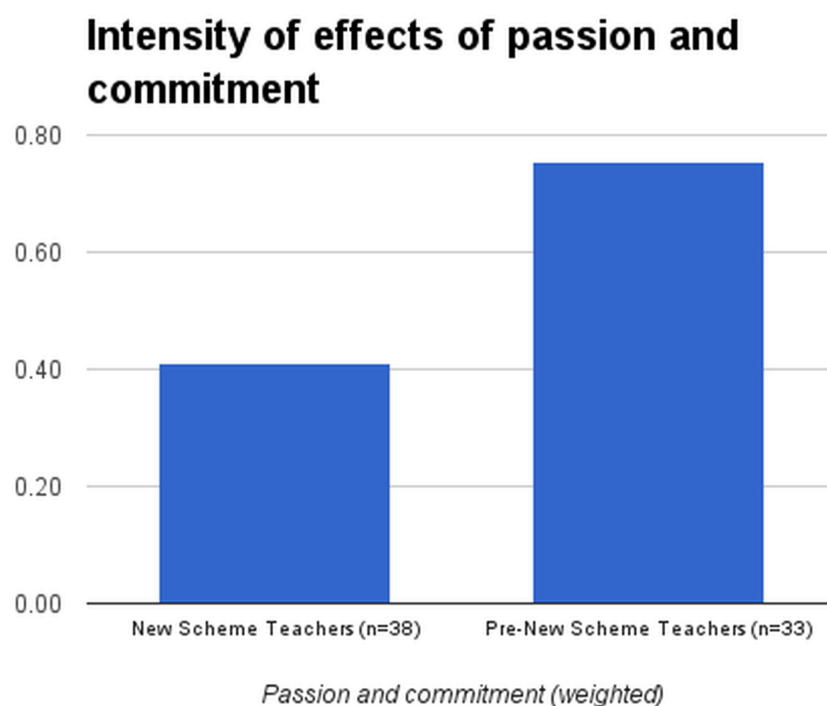


Figure 6.5: Intensity of effects of passion and commitment (by Scheme).

A teacher whose knowledge, skills and dispositions makes her or him an exemplary teacher in one school setting may not provide the appropriate mix which makes him or her an exemplary teacher in an alternative school setting (Wragg, Haynes, Wragg, & Chamberlin, 2010). As contexts change for teachers—new school leaders, change of schools or school systems, etc.—so does the challenge to reestablish professional identity (Day & Gu, 2010). These realities are not acknowledged in the AITSL Standards and their accountability mechanisms as they are currently constructed. What is required, argues McCulla (2012), are “wise policies” that “help teachers step back from the technicalities of what they have to do and how they are to do it, and reconnect with why it is they do their work” (p. 13).



## 6.7. CONCERNING NORMALISATION

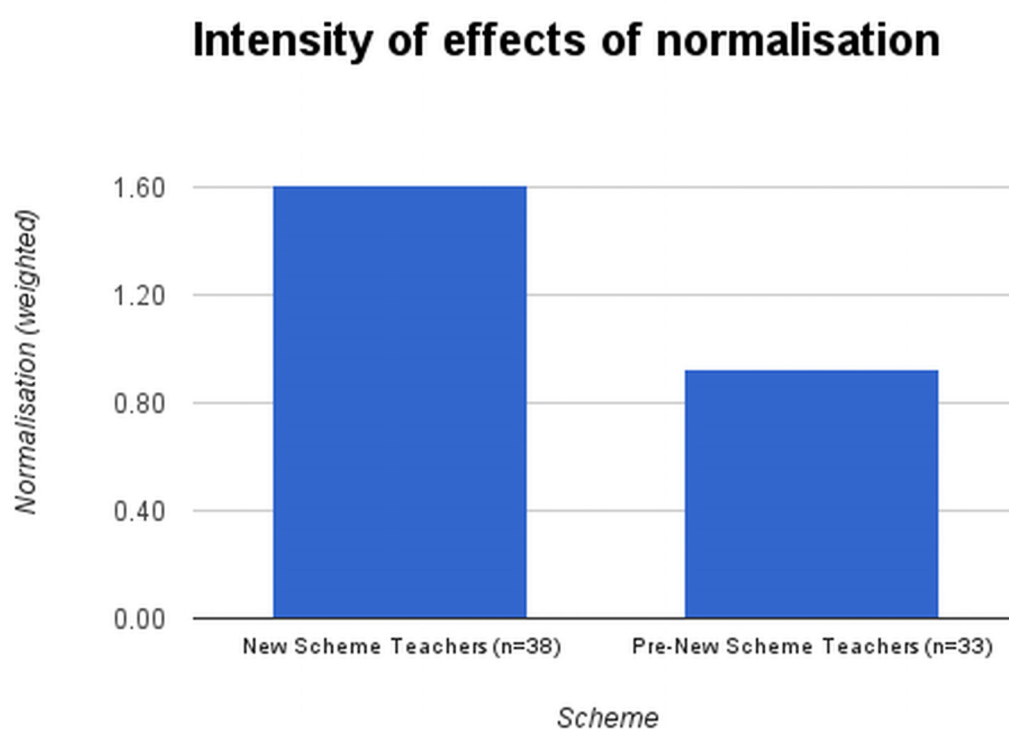
The seventh proposition concerns normalisation. The proposition is that more experienced teachers have not yet been persuaded of the necessity or importance of professional standards. The idea of normalisation was discussed in Section 4.1.5 (p. 120). Deviation from the norm is a matter of degrees along a continuum; normative disciplinary structures typically assign grades, divisions, awards, and honours and dishonours which allow for discrimination, surveillance, reward, and punishment, to ensure conformity (Foucault, 1995). Professional standards, with their accreditation processes leading to levels of attainment, promises of higher status, and threats of deregistration, neatly fit this profile of normativity. Teachers have been, in general terms, highly subject to normalising disciplinary structures over the entire course of modern mass education (Bourke, 2011). Professional standards for teachers are but a recent innovation in a deep archaeology of normalising technologies in education (Foucault, 1995). This section will discuss the degree to which the normalising tendencies of the AITSL Standards are currently being resisted, particularly by more experienced teachers.

### 6.7.1. More experienced teachers have not yet been persuaded of the necessity or importance of professional standards

The normalising effects of professional standards are most clearly identified in an examination of the difference in a normalising discourse in the interview responses of New Scheme compared to pre-New Scheme teachers, as illustrated in Figure 6.6.

Bourke's (2011) thesis on the archaeology of teacher professional standards, with particular reference to the AITSL Standards, concludes that "teachers to a great extent abide by the standards" and that therefore "the professional standards have become the rules, the norm" (p. 251), a finding replicated in other jurisdictions such as the UK (H. Smith, 2012) and the US (Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004). Figure 6.6 nuances this view, suggesting that New Scheme teachers were nearly twice as likely to engage in normalising discourses when discussing professional standards compared to pre-New Scheme teachers. Not all New Scheme teachers are experienced but, by definition, all pre-New Scheme teachers entered the

profession pre-2004 and are thus a group with 11 plus years of experience, representing the views of more experienced teachers. More experienced teachers have not yet been persuaded of the necessity or importance of professional standards. Perhaps this is because they have yet to be subjected to the normalising influence of professional standards accreditation processes, but Figure 6.5 (p. 182) would suggest otherwise—more experienced teachers are aware of what makes a difference to the construction of the exemplary teacher, factors like passion and commitment which they do not find in the AITSL Standards. More experienced teachers who can still imagine an educational ecology outside the present day neoliberal one (because they remember it) are resisting the ontological shift which is exerting pressure on teachers to be constructed in the image of technical professional standards. This is not to suggest a harkening back to a romanticised past, but rather to call for recognition that the quality improvement of teachers will not best be served by professional standards which fail to acknowledge the centrality of teacher dispositions in the construction of the exemplary teacher.



*Figure 6.6: Intensity of effects of normalisation (by Scheme).*

## **6.8. CONCERNING DESIRE AND POWER**

The eighth proposition concerns desire and power and how professional standards come to be as seductive as they are. The proposition is that many teachers come to desire the model of teacher that inheres the AITSL Standards and the compliance actions that necessarily follow, even though those actions may be limiting to the portrayal of the exemplary teacher. A consideration is made of the relationship between desire and pleasure/power in various formulations by Foucault (1985; 1996d; 1996f). The proposition suggests that in normalising professional standards, teachers undermine the importance of the ontological dimension of their work and thus do violence to the aspirations of the teaching profession. This proposition reflects teachers' conceptions of professional standards that are vastly different to the conceptions underpinning the previous proposition. In Section 6.7.1 (p. 183), a degree of resistance from teachers to the limiting effects of professional standards was encountered—limiting in the sense that they provide a hollowed out portrait of what the exemplary teacher might be. That proposition was derived from the north-west quadrant of our outcome space (Figure 5.3, p.156). The current contradistinctive proposition, that the normalisation of professional standards is reflected in teachers' discourse and discursive practices, is derived from conceptions of professional standards in the south-east quadrant of the outcome space. It will be argued that teachers themselves, in accepting the AITSL Standards in their current form, also contribute to the hollowing out of 'teacher', with commensurate threats of negative impacts on teacher professional identity and agency, and the aspirational elements of the north-east corner of the outcome space. Finally, the section draws a conclusion about the need for teachers to become more reflexively aware of these dynamics at play in professional standards. The reflexivity encouraged by the AITSL Standards apparatus is not enough, as it is reflexivity only to the standards themselves.

### **6.8.1. Many teachers are seduced by the rhetoric of the AITSL Standards**

More teachers (n=50) reflected normalising discourses than did not in the course of the research interviews for this study. Many teachers viewed the AITSL Standards as unproblematic and normative. These teachers reflect a desire to act in accordance with the

dictates of the AITSL Standards, thus valorising the epistemological dimension of teaching that the AITSL Standards highlight. From a Foucauldian perspective, as introduced in Section 4.1.5 (p. 120), the ethical experience of teachers in this instance is not led by the teaching acts which they prioritise, nor their desire to do the ‘right thing’ as determined by others and codified in the AITSL Standards, nor the pleasure which conformity to the AITSL Standards brings, but is rather the expression of all three—desire, pleasure, and acts—working as part of a positive feedback loop that is self-sustaining. As Foucault writes, it is a dynamic circle, evincing “the desire that leads to the act, the act that is linked to pleasure, and the pleasure that occasions desire” (Foucault, 1985, p. 43). Elsewhere, Foucault, in a 1972 conversation with Gilles Deleuze, notes the complex relationship between “desire, power, and interest” (Foucault, 1996d, p. 80). In Foucault’s first conference appearance in the US three years later, again in the company of Deleuze, he stated that “power induces and produces desire” (Foucault, 1996f, p. 158). The pleasure/power that is derived from compliance to professional standards is the sense of the kudos and professional rewards that will issue from adherence to them—the knowledge that one is an expert teacher as defined in the standards. The pleasure/power of compliance feeds the desire which is perceived to be bound up in one’s interests (Foucault, 1996d) and so on.

The relationship between pleasure/power and desire/interest suggests the seductiveness of mechanisms such as professional standards for teachers, with their promises of expertise, quality, and status. When the “soul” becomes seduced, it goes “beyond what the body demands and what its needs dictate” (Foucault, 1986, p. 135). Perhaps teachers being seduced by a professional standards discourse has led to the conduct of intensified actions implicit in professional standards that have exposed the ‘body of the teacher’, such that “education has increasingly become the ‘battered profession’” (Dinham, 2013a, p. 98).

The notion of teachers and other agents engaged with the AITSL Standards being seduced by them highlights that we are, or at least might be, the architects of our own domination (Lakomski, 1984). These insights lend some prescience to Sachs’ (2003b) warning: “There is

a danger that, with teachers accepting the challenge of using a standards framework as a source of professional learning, they become complicit in their own exploitation and the intensification of their work” (p. 184).

In teachers’ normalised responses to the AITSL Standards they succumb to the technical rationality of professional standards which dictate to them what a teacher looks like—what a teacher must know and be able to do. When the absence of teacher dispositions in professional standards is ignored, a violence is done which may well be masked by the seductiveness of professional standards and the neoliberal ecology into which they neatly fit. In this instance of seduction, teachers have developed a desire to adhere to a set of professional standards that determine and narrow the definition of what it is to be a teacher and ultimately impact on their professional identity and their concomitant agency (Parr, 2010).

It is contended here that the neoliberal ecology of professional standards has created such a dominant normative environment that teachers find it difficult to imagine that the world could be structured otherwise. The concept of desire suggests that teachers are not simply allowing the technical rationality of professional standards to be imposed on them, but face the threat of becoming active participants in the perpetration of a technical rationalisation of their work. Through their compliance with regulation and their acquiescence to self-controlling mechanisms like maintenance of accreditation regimes, as evidenced in Section 5.8 (p. 152), they become the surveilled docile body that cedes power (Bourke, 2011). “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1995, p. 136).

A reflexive awareness of these dynamics at play in professional standards is key to teachers’ exercise of greater power and thus greater agency in relation to them. Foucault notes that docile bodies emerged from the development of the ‘Disciplines’ of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which relied on a shift from the physical disciplinary power over the body to a subtle pastoral power over the soul (Foucault, 1982; 2000a). Utilising self-examination and confession, pastoral power commands control over the individual, creating a

self-regulation far beyond what disciplinary power was ever able to achieve (Foucault, 1978). In the workplace, the confession of pastoral power occurs through the sophisticated practice of the ‘self-appraisal’. Self-assessment in performance appraisal, accreditation and reaccreditation processes is entrenched in the modern workplace (Usher & Edwards, 2000) and no less with respect to the performance and development cycle apparatus supporting the AITSL Standards, which specifically notes the importance of teacher self-assessment as evidence of adequate performance (AITSL, 2012a). AITSL’s *Performance and Development Framework* (AITSL, 2012a) does not specifically mention Likert-scale-type self-assessment, but such instrumentalist tools can be found in AITSL’s promotion of the *Self-Assessment Tool* for teachers (AITSL, 2015d) and the *360° Reflection Tool* (AITSL, 2015a) for school leaders. Contrasting with AITSL’s development of appraisal instruments is recent research that has called into question the efficacy of business practices around performance appraisal (O’Neill, McLarnon, & Carswell, 2015) leading some multinational performance management companies to drop them (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015). This has commenced a global trend away from the use of instrumentalist performance management technologies (Tweedle & Wild, 2015; Kaine & Johns, 2015), just at the time that AITSL is introducing them.

AITSL documents supporting professional standards are replete with encouragement for teacher reflexivity (AITSL, 2014b; 2014c; 2014e; 2014f). In the current argument there is not an objection to teacher reflexivity per se; the issue is that teachers are encouraged to turn their reflective gaze inwards to the professional standards document. In their responses for the current research, teachers normalised this focus of their reflexive gaze repeatedly. Given the arguments that have been presented to this point, namely that the AITSL Standards almost entirely lack an ontological dimension that addresses the teacher dispositions that teachers know to be important, reflection on the present form of the AITSL Standards is more likely than not to foster the reproduction of the teacher as a compliant technical officer, contrary to the aspirations of the teaching profession.

## **6.9. CONCERNING THE AITSL STANDARDS**

The ninth and penultimate proposition concerns the AITSL Standards directly. The

proposition is that the AITSL Standards may be necessary but not sufficient for the development of teacher quality. Earlier discussion in Section 6.7.1 (p. 183) noted the limiting effects of professional standards. The argument set out below draws a link between resistance and normalisation. The resistance referred to is teachers' resistance to accepting the portrait of 'teacher' inherent in the AITSL Standards. The normalisation referred to is the evidence of the research base dealt with earlier in the discussion of the limiting effects of normalisation and technical rationality (Section 2.4, p. 42 and Section 4.1.5, p. 120). Teachers both resist and normalise professional standards at different points; navigating through that reality is what this section seeks to discuss. Firstly, teachers' dissatisfaction that the AITSL Standards do not describe the exemplary teacher will be reiterated. A justification for continuing to address professional standards and not rejecting them outright will then be made. The discussion continues with a consideration of this question: If professional standards are an ongoing part of the modern education ecology, how might teacher dispositions be addressed if they do not form a part of the AITSL Standards in their current form? Finally, the section concludes by emphasising the self-limiting nature of technical professional standards and suggesting the importance of critical reflexivity of teachers as a way forward.

#### **6.9.1. The AITSL Standards are necessary but not sufficient**

In expressing views such as "*we already do all this*" (Harry, St Edbert's), teachers indicated that the AITSL Standards do indeed capture a part of their work—the technical competencies of the epistemological domain—what the teacher must know and be able to do. What the AITSL Standards do not capture, however, are the dispositions of the ontological domain—the human person that the teacher becomes—which are seen as critical to the portrait of the exemplary teacher. In summary, the AITSL Standards measure the knowledge and skills of the teacher—things that matter—but they do not measure *everything* that matters. To repeat Kristen's (St Charity's) refrain: "*There is so much that's not on these pages*" that is central to professional teaching.

While teachers expressed opinions that would concur with the view that "technique is what teachers use until the real teacher arrives" (Palmer, 2007, p. 6), they had less surety about a

framework for the elements of *being teacher* that were missing from the AITSL Standards. Thinking about teachers' "*natural, organic stuff*," Carmel (St Fabian's) opined "*I just don't think you could put that into words*." Offering the proposition that the AITSL Standards are 'necessary but not sufficient' presupposes at least two things, the ongoing reality of professional standards and the possibility of codification of teacher dispositions in teacher professional standards. Before proceeding further, each of these propositions needs to be considered in turn.

Firstly, the proposition 'necessary but not sufficient' does not argue the point about the appropriateness of the existence of professional standards. To do so would be unproductive. As has been noted in Chapters 1 and 2, professional standards are near enough to a fixed part of the neoliberal ecology of the global metropole. Even beyond that, instrumentalist solutions in education, of which the standards movement is a part, have become normalised in some sections of scholarship on education (Silova & Brehm, 2015; Smyth, et al., 2014). Therefore, considering how to make professional standards *better* is a more useful consideration.

Secondly, the proposition 'necessary but not sufficient' presupposes that the kind of information that inheres teacher dispositions (a set of mutable ontological qualities) can be made explicit in a codified set of professional standards. This invites a discussion of 'tacit knowledge'. Tacit knowledge is a term with a long history in a variety of disciplines, but ultimately "has come to signify an absolute type, namely: 'not codified knowledge'" (Cowan, David, & Foray, 2000, p. 212). But teacher dispositions are not tacit *knowledge*, because, as has been frequently stated, they are ontological, not epistemological. The non-epistemological nature of tacit ontological phenomena such as teacher dispositions is virtually unrecognised in the literature—only knowledge is privileged. Earl and Timperley (2008) perhaps come closest. In discussing teachers' personal theories of education, they note that "through the process of explaining these theories to others who hold different views, what is known is made more explicit together with the values, beliefs and evidence that underpin them" (Earl & Timperley, 2008, pp. 1–2). Just how far the instrumentalism of neoliberal proclivities have impacted on



education, now perceived as an entity of the knowledge economy, can be readily identified in the following view of the codification of knowledge:

Any individual or group of agents makes decisions about what kind of knowledge activity to pursue and how it will be carried on. Should the output be codified or remain uncoded? Are the inputs to be made manifest or latent in the production process? For an economist, there is a simple one-line answer: the choices will depend on the perceived costs and benefits. (Cowan, et al., 2000, p. 241)

There is, of course, a danger in trying to codify knowledge (Stanley & Stronach, 2012). The attempt to capture the totality of an entity is illusory—any codification is only a pretense to totally encapsulating a phenomenon. The unspoken truth of any codification is that it has been achieved by “exclusion, rejections, and denials” (Foucault, 2013, p. 28). Herein lies the problem of including teacher dispositions in any professional standards codification. It is no comfort that the problem exists for professional standards with or without the consideration of teacher dispositions.

Leaving the AITSL Standards unaltered is no comfort either. In keeping with the explanation of technical rationality offered in Section 2.4 (p. 42), the professional-standards-as-technical-competencies serve the risk minimisation function of a neoliberal audit society. Risk minimisation strategies are self-limiting; they will contribute to ensuring a minimum level of competency for teachers, but they will not ensure *excellence*, the aspiration of the quality teacher agenda. They are, rather, “*bottom of the pond stuff*” (Research Assistant C), as one of the research assistants put it. This is the very antithesis of professionalism, which is characterised by the aspiration for excellence and exemplary ethics (Monteiro, 2015).

Perhaps the greatest tool at the service of the teacher in negotiating professional standards is critical reflexivity (Smyth, et al., 2014). Not the self-limiting teacher reflection-on-the-standards which was discussed in Section 6.8.1 (p. 185), but rather a larger, audacious reflexivity (Foucault, 1984c) that looks beyond the gaze of professional standards—“not a means to an end or something to perform, but rather a way of being in the world” (Hébert,

2015, p. 369). In problematising professional standards (Section 4.1.4, p. 119), rather than seeing them as common sense, teachers may be able to move to the boundary, so to speak, the better to understand their own frame of reference, where it is possible to interrogate assumptions, work out implications, understand their present situation, and better plan for the future.

## **6.10. CONCERNING PROFESSIONALISM**

The tenth and final proposition concerns professionalism. The proposition is that current professional standards arrangements mitigate against active professionalism. It is an apposite focus for a study on professional standards of which the precise point is to foster professionalism. This section will argue the proposition that current professional standards arrangements mitigate against active professionalism. The section opens with an explanation of why the north-east quadrant of the outcome space (Figure 5.3, p. 156) approximates the conception of professional standards which holds the greatest promise for developing teacher quality. An argument will be mounted for why ontologically oriented ‘teacher dispositions’ are best understood as belonging in this north-east quadrant, emphasising their importance for teacher professionalism. It will then go on to discuss the paradox that the north-east corner is precisely the quadrant that is least nourished in the current incarnation of the AITSL Standards and where teachers need to be. A set of clarifying conclusions regarding the outcome space will be offered, based on the arguments put both in this section and in this chapter as a whole. The section concludes by suggesting that a resituating of professional standards as a part of a broader framework would serve to further develop teacher quality by enhancing teacher agency and professional identity; it would do this by fostering teacher dispositions and an audacious critical reflexivity to produce a new form of active professionalism.

### **6.10.1. Current professional standards arrangements mitigate against active professionalism**

The outcome space derived for this study, illustrated in Figure 5.3 (p. 156), represents the relationship amongst the conceptions teachers have of professional standards. As was noted in Section 5.1 (p. 126), the western half of the outcome space dominates teachers' conceptions of professional standards, that is, there is a dominance of the conception that professional standards are an accountability tool rather than a tool for teacher growth and development. That professional standards are seen mostly if not completely as an accountability tool is a problem for at least five reasons.

Firstly, it is a problem because professional standards are not going to go away. Section 6.9.1 (p. 189) discussed the ongoing reality of the presence of professional standards. There is a dissonance between professional standards and lived experience, and there is a dissonance between standards-based continuing professional development (CPD) and the need for ontological nurturing (Webster-Wright, 2010), but there is no current way of addressing these dissonances which obviously or intentionally enhance teacher quality. Secondly and relatedly, it is a problem because of the association between excessive accountability and low morale. The conception of professional standards as an accountability tool was associated with teacher negativity in the research data (Section 5.1, p. 129). Literature from across the global metropole reports the association between teacher negativity and declining morale (Bourke, Lidstone, & Ryan, 2013; Donnelly & Sadler, 2009; Hamilton, et al., 2007; Sahlberg, 2010b; Webb, 2005). Thirdly, it is a problem because poor morale is antithetical to strong professional identity, considered essential for a high quality teaching profession (Connell, 2009; Day & Sachs, 2004; Mockler, 2011; Monteiro, 2015; Ramsay, 1988). Fourthly, professional identity, as defined in Section 2.7.1 (p. 58), is closely bound to teacher autonomy, that is, the ability for the teacher to make fine-grained professional judgements about their work so that they are best able to promote the needs of individual students (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Sahlberg, 2011; Webb, 2002). Fifthly, as was seen in Section 2.7.1 (p. 58), professional identity also connects to the ontological dimension of "becoming and

being teacher” (Beijaard, et al., 2004, p. 113). These five connecting points draw one to the conclusion that the north-east quadrant of the outcome space is where the greatest promise lies to actualise professional standards in the service of improving teacher quality.

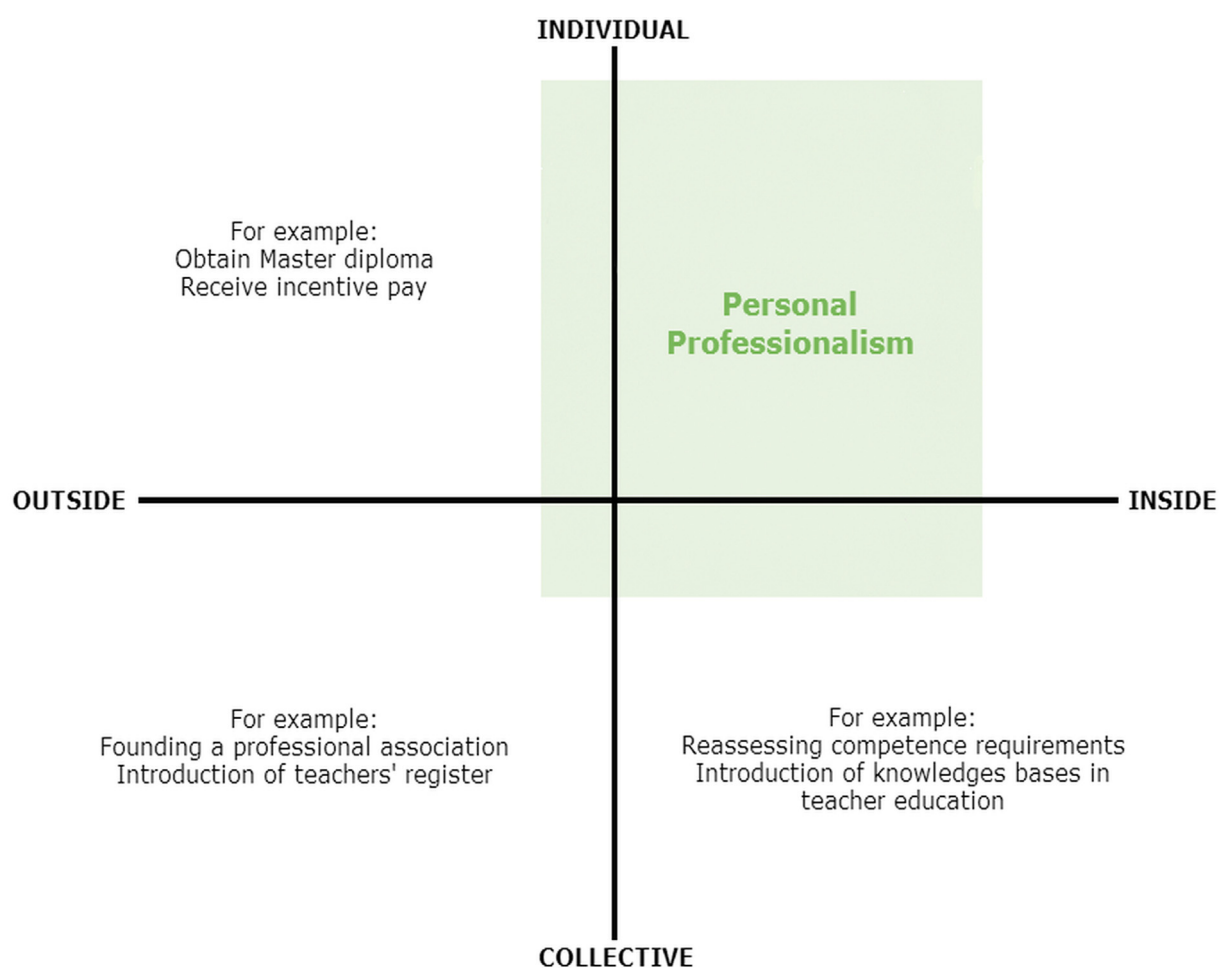
Correspondingly, they also indicate why it is a problem that teachers’ conceptions of professional standards are focused in the western half of the outcome space.

The means to enable teachers’ conceptions of professional standards to lie more in the north-east quadrant of the outcome space is a combination of strengthening teacher agency and facilitating a teaching culture where support of professional learning and growth is paramount. Together these movements take teachers closer to an active professionalism described in Section 5.9.4 (p. 160). The argument which proceeds from here will build a case for the positioning of teacher dispositions in the north-east quadrant of the outcome space and how nurturing them would significantly contribute to the development of active professionalism.

There are interesting parallels between the outcome space (Figure 5.3, p. 156) and the exploratory framework constructed by the *Onderwijsraad* (Educational Council of the Netherlands) (Onderwijsraad, 2013). This framework is part of a white paper entitled *Exploration: Being Teacher: More Focus on Personal Professionalism* (hereafter *Being Teacher*) on what the *Onderwijsraad* terms ‘personal professionalism’, exploring the personal dimensions of teaching. An adapted version of their exploratory framework is presented in Figure 6.7.

Figure 6.7 has been flipped 180 degrees on both axes from the original arbitrary orientation for the purposes of making a comparison with this study’s outcome space. On its vertical axis, the *Being Teacher* framework recognises the collective dimension of teaching, where teachers are a part of both their school community and a larger workforce, both entailing significant public responsibilities and subjugation to policy. The reoriented framework positions the individual dimension of teaching at the northern end of the vertical axis, meaning the domain of each teacher’s own classes and daily engagement with students, colleagues, parents and

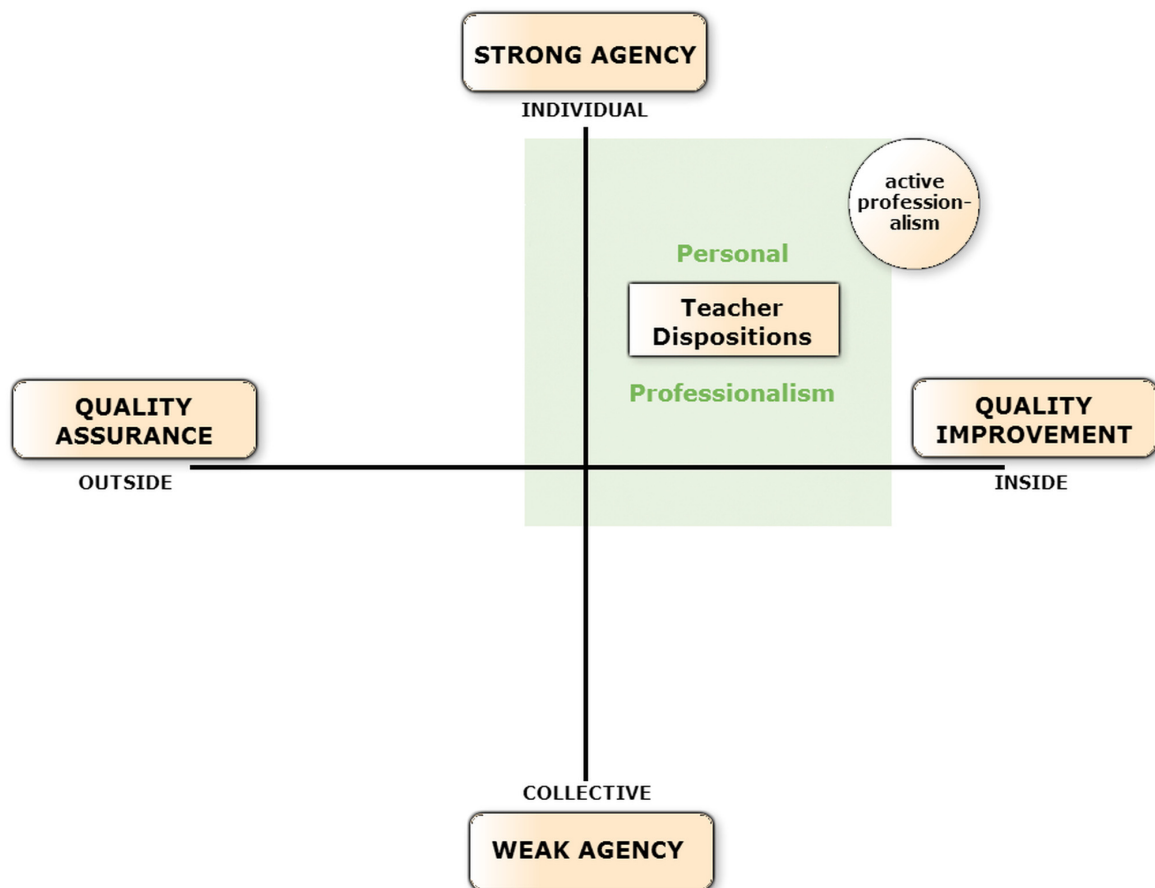
school leaders. On the horizontal axis, the framework labels the western end as the ‘outside’, representing the view that government education policy is frequently focused in an outward-looking way, for example, to account for teachers’ competence or performance to the public or to enhance the status of teaching in the public square through policy-mediated attempts to raise the status of the profession. Finally, the eastern end of the horizontal axis is the ‘inside’ of teaching, referring to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, care and judgements that teachers employ in the schoolhouse on a daily basis. These two axes theorise the responsibilities (vertical) and accountabilities (horizontal) of teachers. The exploratory framework places teachers’ personal professionalism largely in the north-east quadrant.



*Figure 6.7: Onderwijsraad (Educational Council of the Netherlands) exploratory framework for personal professionalism. Adapted from Onderwijsraad, 2013, p. 14.*

In discussing the meaning of personal professionalism, *Being Teacher* draws the conclusion that teachers are highly aware of who are the most exemplary teachers in their schools (Onderwijsraad, 2013). This is a finding strongly corroborated, in an inverse way, by the extensive UK *Teaching Competence Project*, actually a study on teacher *incompetence*, which found that teachers were highly attuned to the capacities of their immediate workplace peers (Wragg, et al., 2010). The *Being Teacher* finding is also strongly corroborated by the data from participants in the current study, as outlined in Section 5.10 (p. 162). The *Being Teacher* report uses these teacher-derived notions of the exemplary teacher to describe personal professionalism. The point most apposite to this research is that personal professionalism derives from teachers' "personal values and *their conception of the teacher they want to be* [emphasis added]" (Onderwijsraad, 2013, p. 13). Beyond this, *Being Teacher* does not make explicit what the elements of personal professionalism actually are. It hints at the ontologicality of personal professionalism when it notes that teachers "have a heart" for their students (p. 23) and when it refers to it as the "personal core" of teacher professionalism (Onderwijsraad, 2013, p. 32), but there is no explication of what that heart or core might contain.

Figure 6.8 overlays this study's outcome space on top of the *Being Teacher* exploratory framework with the contextual distractors from both diagrams removed to aid in the generalisation being pursued in the current argument. The connections on the vertical access between the notion of 'collective' responsibility and weak *public* agency described in Section 5.5.2 (p. 145) on the one hand, and 'individual' and strong *personal* agency described in Section 5.4.2 (p. 138) on the other hand, are compelling. Similarly, connections are evident between the discourse of quality assurance (Section 5.1, p. 126) and the notion of outward-looking ('outside') public accountabilities on the one hand and the discourse of quality improvement (Section 5.2, p. 130) and inward-looking ('inside') accountabilities on the other hand. Given these parallels, it is reasonable to postulate that the teacher dispositions described in Section 5.10 (p. 162) give substance to the notion of personal professionalism as they provide a sample of the professional person that teachers want to be.



*Figure 6.8: Outcome space and Onderwijsraad exploratory framework overlaid. The Onderwijsraad (Educational Council of the Netherlands) exploratory framework for personal professionalism is adapted from Onderwijsraad, 2013, p. 14.*

Inward-looking (‘inside’) accountabilities are of the kind nuanced by Sachs (2011a), who suggests that the term ‘accountability’, when promoted by the profession itself, need not be dominated by notions of quality assurance but is able to focus on consolidating quality improvement. Inside accountabilities, as opposed to outside or external accountabilities, hold the greatest promise for effecting change and improvements in teacher practice (Knapp & Feldman, 2012). In the resignification of the term (Section 5.9.4, p. 161), accountability becomes a term connoting powerful moral purpose—a responsibility to the masters that matter to the teacher—students, colleagues, parents and, to some degree, local school leadership. These kinds of concerns dominated in teachers’ expressions of their strong personal agency in the present study (Section 5.4.2 (p. 138). Outward-looking (‘outside’)

accountabilities are of the kind focused on by education agencies and government. An example of ‘outside’ focus is evident in the words of the BOSTES President, Tom Alegounarias, regarding AITSL Standards implementation. He states: “I strongly believe a fair and equitable accreditation system will position the profession to improve student outcomes [*publicly available test results*] and also result in teachers being more highly valued by the community [*teacher status*]” (BOSTES, 2015, p. 1, bracketed comments added). Collective responsibilities are of the kind referred to by teachers when they recognise the importance of collaboration and collegiality and the school’s role in it, as the following example attests:

*It’s coming from the school, I think. It’s coming from the structures the school has in place. It comes from modelling from other teachers. A New Scheme teacher would be looking at models from other teachers. We have lots of different skills sets here. We have situations where we collaborate and teachers share their skills with other teachers, and that sort of environment fosters good teachers. (Gretel, St Giles)*

Finally, individual responsibilities are of the kind where teachers express their autonomy to make fine-grained professional judgements that are needed on a daily basis to meet the needs of their students.

*Being Teacher* suggests that personal professionalism has gained in importance in recent decades due to the increasing complexity of the environments in which teachers work. Despite this, personal professionalism “remains out of sight” (Onderwijsraad, 2013, p. 14) and thus attracts “little attention” (p. 15). *Being Teacher* recommends that “more explicit attention” be paid to personal professionalism in “recognition of its importance” (p. 31).

The current research gives further empirical underpinning to the findings of *Being Teacher*; it theoretically extends the notion of personal professionalism in the form of a sample of teacher dispositions, and postulates the ontological, as opposed to epistemological nature of these dispositions. Additionally, the current study opens up an avenue to consider the collective forms of professionalism that might complement personal professionalism. The answer lies



not in instrumentalist professional standards, but rather in exploring an ongoing ethics narrative that reasserts the ethical heart of teaching. This is considered further in Section 7.8, p. 220.

The preceding discussion leads to some clarifying conclusions about the place of teacher dispositions in teacher professionalism:

- The professionalism that matters to teachers is personal professionalism. Put in the terms of this research, it is developing teachers' personal/professional dispositions in growth towards becoming the exemplary teacher.
- Teacher dispositions occupy the north-east quadrant of the outcome space (5.3, p. 156).
- The north-east quadrant of the outcome space is also the domain of a positive, constructive professional identity for teachers.
- Teacher agency, professional identity and teacher dispositions are intimately connected one to another.
- Development of teachers' professional identity is inextricably bound to the nourishing of teacher dispositions.
- Nourishing teacher dispositions will improve the quality of teachers and by extension the quality of teaching.
- Nourishing teacher dispositions will enhance teacher agency.
- Teachers' fine-grained professional judgements which allow them to best care for students occur best with teachers with highly developed teacher dispositions.
- There is evidence of strong personal agency in teachers' work within their own classrooms and in their own schools, but this personal agency is not recognised in professional standards.
- For the development of teacher quality, the north-east quadrant of the outcome space is the most important but the least occupied in teachers' conceptions of professional standards.
- A form of active professionalism that is realistically achievable in the current neoliberal ecology of education is one which resignifies accountability to the right masters—students, colleagues, parents and school leadership.
- Challenging the discourses that are too heavily weighted towards a discourse of quality assurance is a form of active professionalism.
- Active professionalism has intersections with the 'collective'—teachers feel the collective most vividly in their collaborations with their immediate colleagues.
- A resignification of professional standards requires support in the form of teacher dispositions being taken seriously as a key dimension of teacher professionalism.

- The AITSL Standards, typical of teachers professional standards in many jurisdictions, ignore teacher dispositions.
- If professional standards acknowledged the importance of nourishing teacher dispositions, agency and teacher quality would improve through teachers' engagement with professional standards.
- The culmination of the preceding points and the arguments presented in this chapter is that current professional standards arrangements mitigate against active professionalism and weaken teacher agency.

### 6.10.2. Audacious reflexivity

Perhaps the greatest promise in a new emphasis on the active professionalism of teachers is the insight that nourishing teacher dispositions can contribute to teachers' capacity to *believe in* and *act on* their capacity to make fine-grained professional judgements that best serve the needs of their students in ways that go beyond the limiting contingencies of technically organised professional standards. This is a form of agency that allows teachers to speak with *authority* about the various discourses that constitute the overall ecology of education (B. Davies, 1991). This statement leads to the question of how that might be achieved and returns us to the suggestion offered at the end of Section 6.9.1 (p. 191), a proposition for an audacious critical reflexivity of the kind that Foucault (1984c) suggested.

As was noted in Section 6.8.1 (p. 185), there is an extensive discussion about teacher reflexivity in AITSL's documentation, but it is a reflexivity that seeks compliance to an imposed notion of what the teacher-as-self should be rather than a deep, transformative reflexivity (Ryan & Bourke, 2013). Audacious reflexivity is reflected in Foucault's words when he says: "I don't say the things I say because they are what I think, I say them as a way to make sure they no longer are what I think" (Foucault, 2013, p. 44). Paulo Freire expressed a similar intention in his lifelong theme of a pedagogy of liberation: "We can struggle to become free precisely because we can know we are not free!" (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 13). Giroux (2010) expands on Freire's ideas in more recent times, referring to a critical pedagogy that proposes "a way of thinking beyond the seemingly natural or inevitable state of things" (p. B15); or again, Freire's (1970) notion of conscientisation as "the process in which men

(sic), not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality” (p. 452). Parr (2010) is arguing in this same arena when he argues for “transgression dialogic potential” in teachers which, through critical reflexivity, challenges and destabilises conventional thinking and acting (2010, p. 161). In being bold and taking risks, in “cultivating dissent” (Smyth, et al., 2014, p. 15) and being imaginative and creative in thought, audacious reflexivity can create not just competent teachers but “transformative intellectuals in the classroom” (Baltodano, 2012, p. 502; see also Roberts, 2010). Audacious reflexivity is more artfulness than technical expertise (O’Leary, 2002). It can achieve what Foucault (1985) principally sought to examine in his relational work: the extent to which “the effort to think one’s own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently” (p. 9).

An audacious reflexivity would not narrow its gaze to professional standards but look holistically beyond them (Beckett, 2011). Such a reflexivity would allow teachers to orchestrate a power over their work to reconfigure the norms of professional standards (Gowlett, 2015). Such a reflexivity is within the means of teachers right now, as noted in the research of Singh, Heimans and Glasswell (2014), who recognised in their study of teachers’ policy enactments not just “hope or resistance” but teachers who “actively engage with a completely different set of ideas about what schooling might be about” (p. 834). The reflexivity of the authentic and emancipated self stands as an ideal for the teacher-practitioner as active professional (Webster-Wright, 2006; 2010).

Audacious reflexivity can be framed as a part of care of the self (Section 4.1.3, p. 117). Audacious reflexivity provides the insights and the resilience for a teacher to maintain the ethical self, the “work one does on oneself” (Wain, 2007, p. 167), necessary to create a bulwark against the limits to professional identity imposed by the technical rationality of professional standards such as the AITSL Standards. An audacious reflexivity might be bold enough to challenge “selective inattention to practical competence and professional artistry”

(Schön, 2005, p. vii) and heighten teachers' sense of professionalism so that teaching becomes a part of their "art of living" (Foucault, 1986, p. 45).

### **6.10.3. Active professionalism**

In summary, professionalism described in this section is an 'active professionalism' which:

- challenges excessive, externally imposed accountabilities;
- develops an audacious, holistic critical reflexivity;
- values and nurtures teacher dispositions as core to the professionalism of the exemplary teacher;
- recognises fine-grained professional judgement as the most significant element of a teacher's professionalism.

Active professionalism in this form would serve to further develop teacher quality by enhancing teacher agency and professional identity.

The findings of this thesis were determined from the first phase analysis of the data to produce the phenomenographic outcome space of this study (Chapter 5). Thereafter a second phase critical analysis was applied to the findings (Chapter 6). We are now in a position to draw certain conclusions from the data and offer a number of recommendations arising from those conclusions. Introduced by a summary of the elements of this thesis, these conclusions and recommendations will form the substance of the chapter which now follows.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis problematised professional standards as being an instrument of technical rationality within a neoliberal education ecology. The problematisation of professional standards led to the search for silences and absences, asking teachers what was missing from professional standards. From this, an ontological issue emerged. The inclination of neoliberalism's audit culture to seek to minimise risk extends to the creation of instrumental tools such as the AITSL Standards, professional standards which "describe what teachers should know and be able to do" (Productivity Commission, 2012, p. 174). These descriptions cover the epistemological dimension of teachers' work, but are self-limiting, because they ignore the ontological dimension of the human person which the teacher is in the constant process of becoming.

### 7.1. THE METHODOLOGY APPLIED TO THIS RESEARCH

This study has investigated teachers' perceptions, negotiation and enactment of professional standards utilising phenomenography as its key research approach, building its subject, object and unit of analysis from Thomas' (2011) case study typology (Section 3.2.1, p. 72). The subject of the study has been teachers. The object of the study has been professional standards. The unit of analysis has been teachers' conceptions of professional standards. The case has been the secondary schools of the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Sydney school system. The relationship between these elements is illustrated in Figure 3.1 (p. 72).

Data was analysed using the phenomenographic research approach (Section 3.2.2, p. 74). This phenomenographic approach has sought to discern the finite number of ways in which teachers conceive of professional standards and the ways in which those conceptions are interrelated. This was achieved by cutting the data into decontextualised pools of meaning that, while not the story of individual participants, identify the variety of possible ways in which professional standards might be conceived. The mapping of the relationships between teachers' conceptions of professional standards resulted in the phenomenographic outcome space (Section 5.9, p. 156) which formed the grounding for the discussion of Chapter 6.

## 7.2. RESEARCH SAMPLE SUMMARY

A purposive sample of 71 teachers of four or more years experience was selected from seven Sydney CEO systemic secondary schools (Section 3.3.1.2.2, p. 80). The CEO Sydney system was selected as a critical case because, as a high performing system, it is illustrative of the limit of the possibilities for professional standards in developing the teacher profession. The study was limited to secondary schools for reasons of school-level complexity, gender mix and accessibility (Section 3.3.1.1, p. 76). Variety in the selection of participants was achieved through consideration of factors of gender, experience, professional role among potential research participants and school context (Section (3.3.1.2.1, p. 78). Web-based computer software designed by the author (A. Taylor, 2013) was used as a catalyst for the recruitment of teachers for this research and ensured that selected teachers were sufficiently informed about professional standards to be purposive research participants (Section 3.3.1.2.3, p. 81). Schools were selected for variety utilising the publicly available ICSEA metric. At the school level, referred approval (Vallance, 2001) was utilised, leveraging school-based knowledge to apply depth and expertise to the selection of participants (Section 3.3.1.2.4, p. 82).

## 7.3. DATA GATHERING SUMMARY

Following pilot interviewing (Section 3.3.2.1.1, p. 90), semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour were planned and conducted using three research assistants. The use of research assistants was highly purposive given, firstly, the potentially coercive positional power held by the researcher; secondly, the potential for confusion of purpose given that the researcher had taken on cameo roles in the sample schools related to, but distinctly different from the current research; and thirdly the suitability of methodological distance in phenomenographic research. The research assistants, three recently retired secondary school principals, were chosen for their experience, teacher empathy and ethical engagement. At the same time they were suitably disengaged from the professional standards debate in schools, as they had retired before it had gathered pace in Australia (Section 3.3.2.2, p. 91). Research assistants training resulted in the refinement of the *Interview Guide* (Appendix J) and *Post Interview Briefing Sheet* (Appendix L, p. 304) which contributed to a consistent approach to

each interview. The *Peer Debrief Process* (Appendix M) describes the research assistants training that was conducted as well as regular meetings that were held between the researcher, the research supervisor and the research assistants throughout and at the conclusion of the data gathering and later, towards the conclusion of the data analysis phases. These meetings were productive and generative, offering another layer of data that assisted in the development of the propositions of Chapter 6.

#### **7.4. DATA ANALYSIS SUMMARY**

There were two phases to the data analysis in this research. The first phase was a typical phenomenographic analysis. NVivo (QSR International, 2013) was utilised to code data from 49.5 hours of participant interviews and 15 hours of data from the peer debrief sessions (Appendix M). Initial coding followed by iterative oncoding in a helical process of review and refinement of the data (Section 3.3.3, p. 94; Appendix M), distilled the data down into eight parent nodes which represented the starting point for the categories of description outlined in Chapter 5. In addition to the use of NVivo (QSR International, 2013), Leximancer (A. E. Smith, 2011) was used to assist in the discernment of the phenomenographic outcome space. A full description of the outcome space can be found in Section 5.9 (p. 154). The results of the first phase data analysis form the substance of Chapter 5.

The second phase analysis of the outcome space (Figure 5.3, p. 156) utilised critical tools from the Foucauldian toolbox (Section 4.1, p. 109). Through a focus on the intersubjective space between the subject of the research—teachers and the object of the research—professional standards, insights were sought that would cast light on the research question and sub-questions. The results of the second phase data analysis form the substance of Chapter 6. The key findings from the first and second phase data analyses are summarised in the following sections.

#### **7.5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This thesis makes a contribution to the body of knowledge about professional standards

because it explores professional standards from a perspective that is distinctly different from other examinations in the same educational context. For example, AITSL has commissioned its own extensive research into the AITSL Standards (AITSL, 2014d), but that research is an evaluation of the implementation of professional standards. This thesis has established a distinction between the implementation ambitions of policymakers and the enactment strategies of teachers on the ground (Section 5.4.1, p. 136). It is the latter which is the focus of this thesis. Another study by Bourke (2011) explores the archaeology of professional standards, which seek to establish where professional standards have *come from*... This thesis, in contradistinction, has sought to understand where professional standards are *going to*... Finally, there are several theoretical studies on professional standards written in the same national context as the current study (Clarke & Moore, 2013; Mars, 2012; Sachs, 2011a; Thomas & Watson, 2011; Tuinamuana, 2011). This thesis adds empirical evidence to that research base, privileging the voice of teachers in exploring the place of professional standards in teaching. This section will summarise the nature of that empirical evidence, summarising the findings reported in Chapter 5.

The first phase phenomenographic analysis of the data revealed inconsistencies and contradictions in teachers' perceptions of professional standards. Nonetheless, discernible pools of meaning were revealed in the analysis which formed the basis for building the phenomenographic outcome space of the study (Figure 5.3, p. 156).

Notions of accountability, bureaucracy, surveillance, performativity, audit culture, corporatisation, and elements of neoliberal rhetoric pervaded the research data, with nearly all participants (n=68) touching on what was broadly defined as issues associated with a discourse of quality assurance, with an attendant negativity about professional standards. Negativity was expressed as an impatience with an externally imposed box-ticking and hoop-jumping that distracted teachers from what they want to do. Teachers variously expressed suspicion, anxiety, resentment, cynicism, fear, uncertainty, and a lack of trust in the AITSL Standards. The power of the accountability discourse is such that teachers contribute to a



discourse of teacher derision which only serves to heighten the sense that professional standards have primarily an accountability purpose (Section 5.1, p. 126).

In contrast to this, a majority (n=69) of the participants also spoke about the potential of professional standards for teachers to improve the quality of teaching and teachers, largely in the context of discussion around their own professional learning and the way in which professional standards assisted them to reflect on their teaching. Teacher quality elements of collaboration, observation, being supported, advancement, validation, standards-as-aspirational, and capacity building were found, broadly defined as issues associated with a discourse of quality improvement (Section 5.2, p. 130).

One set of responses has been termed ‘contra-professional’ in this study. These responses were typified by teachers’ perceptions that professional standards actually work contrary to the interests of teachers and their professionalism. Most of these perceptions derived from New Scheme teachers, who have had the greatest exposure to professional standards because they are already regulated by them (Section 5.3, p. 132).

Teacher agency presented as one of the most interesting findings of the study. Teachers expressed both strong agency (Section 5.4, p. 134) and weak agency (Section 5.5, p. 140), but these agencies were different in kind. Teachers who, in their interview responses demonstrated strong *personal* agency, also frequently evidenced a weak *public* agency. Strong personal agency was defined by teachers’ sense of their power to control their professional destiny. In their narratives of strong personal agency, teachers focused on their local context—their own classrooms and their home school—and they connected their stories to beliefs that experience and relationality matter. Indeed, a strong school culture was expressed as a strong enabler of teacher agency. Strong personal agency was also characterised by enactment strategies that would enable a teacher to “*work around the system*” (Carmel, St Fabian’s). By recontextualising, selectively applying and creatively manipulating professional standards implementation expectations, teachers demonstrated a strong personal agency in filtering

policy expectations to meet their own perceived teacher needs which best fitted their personal context.

Weak public agency (Section 5.5, p. 140) is a descriptor of teachers' sense of powerlessness, resignation and a ceding of control to others, either government, other outside agencies such as BOSTES or educational district authorities. One way in which weak public agency manifested itself was as an uncritical trust in the processes that were being applied to teachers as a part of professional standards implementation. Notions of stress, anxiety, fear, sense of being overwhelmed, resentment, imposition, time pressure, negativity, suspicion and cynicism all presented as dimensions of weak public agency. When teachers expressed these sentiments and perceptions, it was invariably directed to agencies outside their school, leaving teachers with the perception that they have little or no voice concerning the implementation of professional standards.

The theme of powerlessness was closely linked to the intensification of work. A growing intensification of work was felt by teachers across all experience levels (Figure 5.1, p. 148) and was seen to be a long-term part of a new ecology of external accountabilities. Work intensification caused a questioning about whether the purpose of teaching had been lost with a concomitant loss of professional identity. Professional standards were seen to be a part of this intensification of work narrative.

The assertion that professional standards will raise the status of teaching is a part of AITSL's and BOSTES' rhetoric in particular (BOSTES, 2015a) and governments' and education agencies' standards in general (Beck, 2008; Cumming, 2010; Ingvarson, 2014; Monteiro, 2015; Mowbray, 2005). Status was seen to be an issue by some teachers who unproblematically accepted the purported but unproven consequential link between professional standards and an increase in status (Section 5.7, p. 150).

The normalising tendencies of professional standards was the last of the categories of description outlined in Section 5.8 (p. 152). Mitch's (St Giles') simple comment that "*you've*

*got to have standards*” well captured the power of normalising neoliberal technologies. Education currently operates in a noosphere so constricted that teachers cannot imagine another way in which teaching might be constructed.

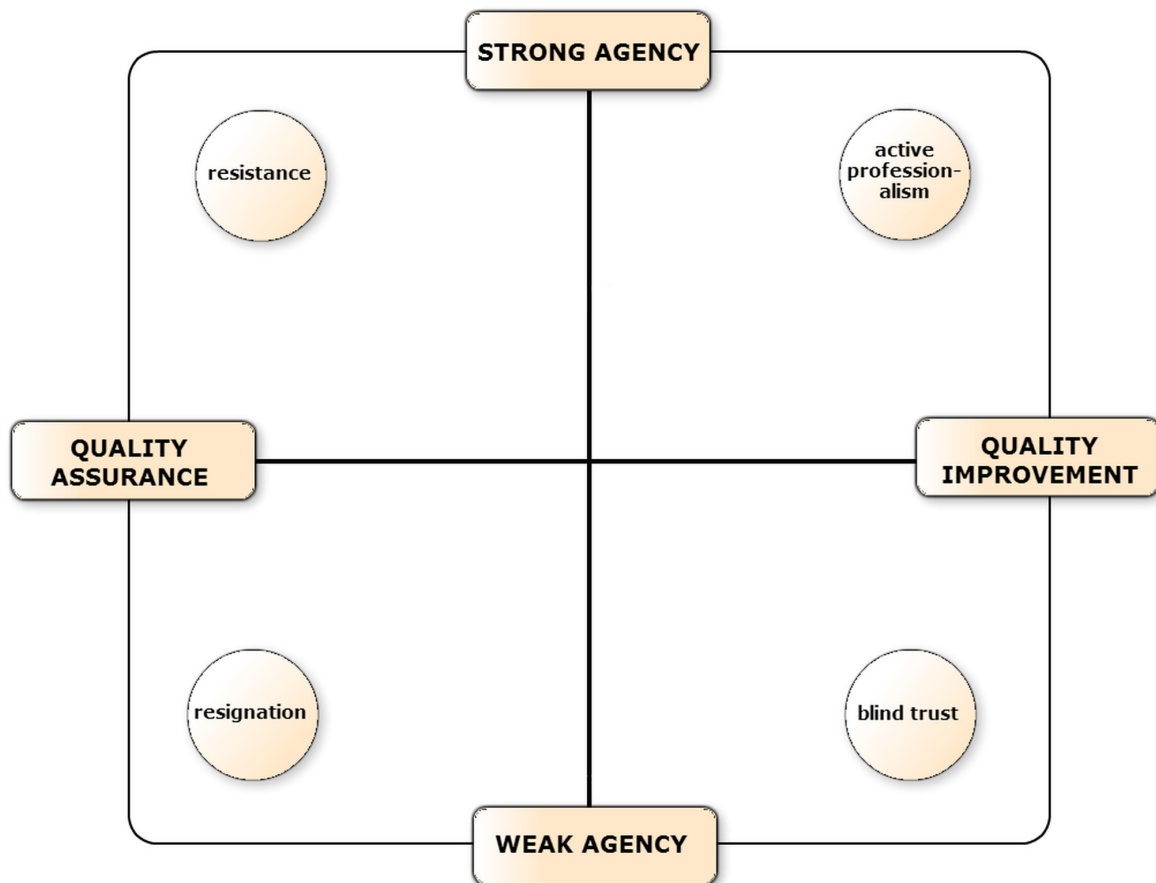
Teachers’ nagging concern with respect to professional standards was put most poignantly and succinctly by Gloria (St Charity’s): A teacher may present well against a list of professional standards competencies, but teachers want to know, “*can you actually teach?*” A similar concern was expressed in the reflections of many of the research participants (Section 5.10, p. 162). Although never fully articulated, what emerged was a strong sense of the critical importance of the ontology of teaching—the human person that the teacher presents to the world and the associated dispositions which enable exemplary teachers to be distinguished from those around them. The sample of teacher dispositions that the study revealed can be found in Appendix S. The inability of teachers to fully express the dimensions of *being* teacher did not appear to impede their ability to use that inchoate awareness to be adept enactors of professional standards for teachers policy.

The outcome space of phenomenographic research represents a mapping of the relationship of the finite number of conceptions about the object of study (Åkerlind, 2012). The outcome space determined for this study is graphically represented in Figure 7.1. Figure 7.1 is identical to Figure 5.3 (p. 156), and is reproduced here for the convenience of the reader and due to its importance to the thesis.

Figure 7.1 illustrates the relationship between strong and weak agency on a north-south axis, reflecting the aspirations of teachers; and quality assurance and quality improvement on an east-west axis, reflecting the aspirations of professional standards policymakers. The intersection of these two axes in the outcome space created four quadrants into which was conceptualised four exemplar nodes derived from the first phase analysis in NVivo.

The south-west quadrant (quality assurance/weak agency), represented by the node ‘resignation’, conceptualises professional standards as an externally imposed instrument of

control that renders teachers powerless but to surrender to its demands. In the face of this conception of professional standards, the teacher is constructed as a compliant technical officer (Section 5.9.1, p. 157).



*Figure 7.1: The outcome space for teachers' conceptions of professional standards.*

The south-east quadrant (quality improvement/weak agency), represented by the node 'blind trust', conceptualises professional standards as delivering the means to improve teacher quality, principally through operating as a tool for teacher reflection-on-practice. This quadrant is represented by the node 'blind trust' because teachers' confident convictions are uncritically expressed in terms of the normative implementation discourse proffered by the AITSL Standards policymakers (Section 5.9.2, p. 158).

The north-west quadrant (quality assurance/strong agency), represented by the node ‘resistance’, conceptualises professional standards as an apparatus of neoliberal educational reforms that are to be resisted through teacher assemblages, accountability choreographies, fabrications, games of power, brokerage, weighing, omissions, additions, reinterpretations and silences that nullify the normalising effects of professional standards (Section 5.4.1, p. 136 and Section 5.9.3, p. 159). This conception of professional standards affords teachers a certain power, but it risks a potentially unproductive agency whereby teachers remain as policy subjects rather than policy actors (Section 5.9.3, p. 159).

Finally, the north-east quadrant (quality improvement/strong agency), represented by the node ‘active professionalism’, conceptualises professional standards as contributive to the life of the teacher as an ongoing learner while maintaining a strong personal agency and concomitant strong, positive, productive, and critically aware professional identity. Of course, professional identity finds expression in all quadrants of the outcome space, but it is only in the north-east quadrant, it is contended, that it has the greatest opportunity to be positive, productive and critically aware. Active professionalism is typified by teachers’ strong urge to work collaboratively with their school-based peers, and their confidence in the centrality of teacher dispositions for the exemplary teacher, qualities which complement the knowledge and skills competencies of the AITSL Standards (Section 5.9.4, p. 160). Active professionalism does not conceptualise professional standards negatively; its concession is that they are necessary but not sufficient (Section 5.4, p. 134).

## **7.6. THESIS CONCLUSIONS**

This thesis has established that the discourse of quality assurance dominates the quality teacher agenda as it applies to professional standards (Section 6.1, p. 167). The domination of this discourse feeds into teacher negativity about professional standards, making it unlikely that professional standards in the current environment will become central to teachers’ self-conception as professionals (Section 6.2, p. 168). Teacher negativity is strongly focused as animosity to the teacher accreditation agency, in this case, the Institute of Teachers (now

BOSTES). Bureaucratic connections to professional standards serve to underline the dominance of the accountability agenda associated with professional standards.

Teacher agency emerged as an important aspect of the research in the secondary analysis phase (Section 6.3, p. 170). Teachers do not appear to have, or indeed to seek, agentic power in the public sphere. For example, while teachers express some interest in the potential for professional standards to raise the status of teaching, it is a relatively minor issue (Section 5.7, p.150). Teacher status is an outwards-facing, public perception issue; it does not face inwards to the relationships that matter—with peers, students, school leaders and parents—and is therefore of low priority (Figure 6.8, p. 197). It is inwards—in the personal sphere—that teachers express a strong agency, reflected in their desire to collaborate and cooperate with peers, their students and their local community generally. These differences have been termed weak public agency and strong personal agency. A focus on strong personal agency is the appropriate focus for future developments in professional standards, because it is along the axis of strong personal agency that the greatest promise lies for professional standards to connect with the aspirations of the teaching profession.

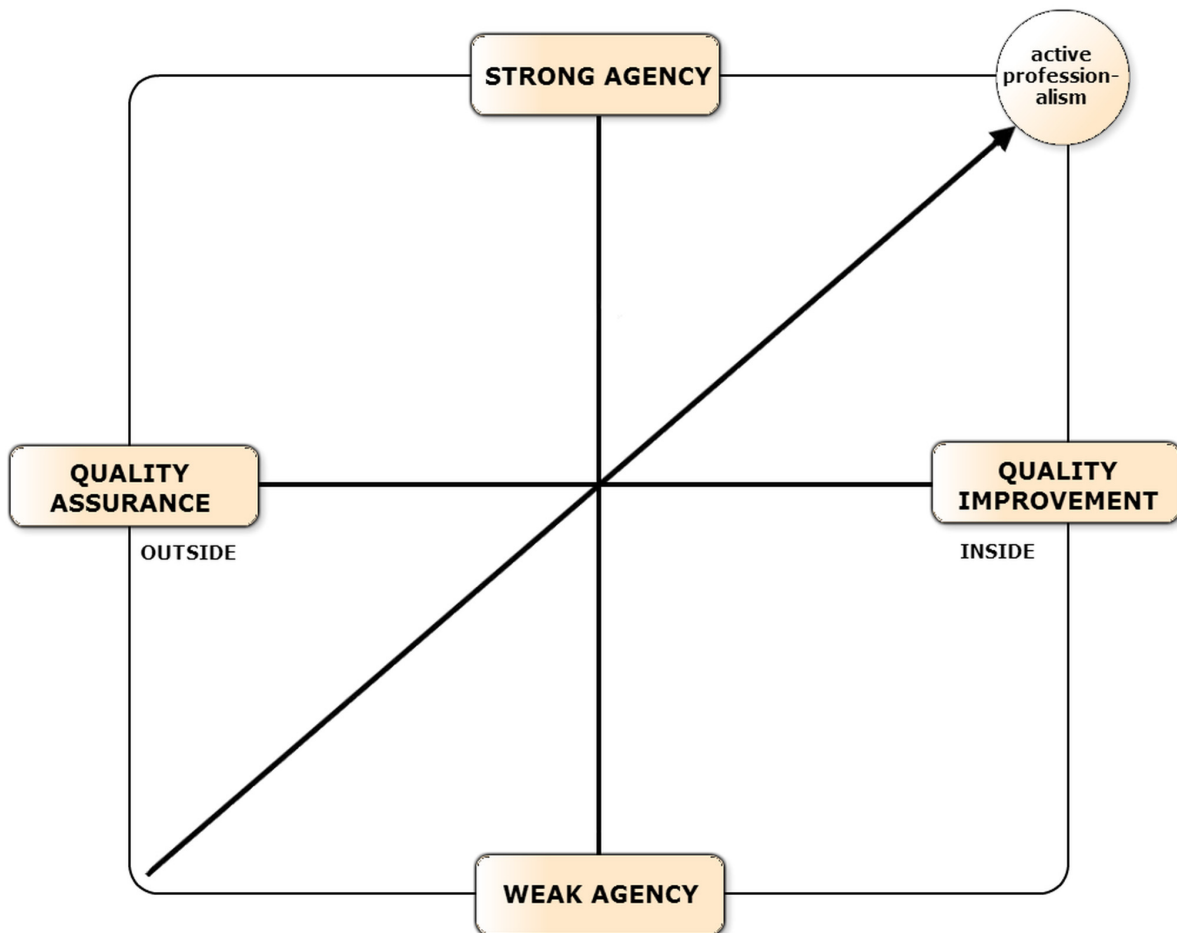
Teachers' focus on strong personal agency is bound to the conception that professionalism comes from *in here*, not *out there*, most particularly fostered by the culture of the school in which they work and the teacher dispositions which they expound. In the face of professional standards, teachers' enactment strategies differ markedly from the intentions of policymakers, because what teachers hold to be most important is missing from standards documents (Section 6.3.2, p. 172). The disconnection between the intentions of policymakers and teachers' enactment strategies limits the potential impact of teaching standards on the profession. For teachers, in focusing on what a teacher should know and be able to do, professional standards omit the significant question of who the teacher *becomes* in the course of committing to the community whom they serve, their school leaders, their colleagues, their students and their parents (Section 6.4, p. 174). This thesis labels the missing ontological element of professional standards as a collection of teacher dispositions (Section 6.5, p. 175).

The empirical verification of the importance of teacher dispositions such as relationality, empathy, commitment, and judgement is a central claim of this thesis. It is further theorised that taking teachers' enactment strategies seriously and acknowledging the importance of teacher dispositions will support teachers into a strong agency-quality improvement conception of professional standards, fostering active professionalism (Figure 5.3, p. 156). Without support, the intensification of work (Section 6.6, p. 179), the powerful normalising tendencies of policy (Section 6.7, p. 183), and teachers' own tendency to desire the very things which may do violence to their profession (Section 6.8, p. 185) will result in a low agency-high quality assurance conception of professional standards that will mitigate against the impact of professional standards on teacher quality.

The AITSL Standards are typical of technical professional standards for teachers generally. Their commonality is focused on the epistemological dimensions of teaching—what a teacher must *know* and be able to *do*, to the exclusion of the ontological dimension of teaching—the human person that the teacher *becomes* in order to be an exemplary teacher in a deeply interpersonal profession (Monteiro, 2015). Ontological capacities are hard to measure and so, consistent with the preoccupation with technical abilities in the modern neoliberal educational ecology, they are largely if not entirely ignored in professional standards (Section 6.9.1, p. 189). Ignoring that which teachers hold to be central to their work asserts limits to what they can *be*, contributing to their sense of powerlessness. A form of professional standards that fails to resonate with teachers' experience of the exemplary teacher will diminish rather than contribute to professional identity and agency.

Finding a mechanism that will support the movement of teachers' conceptions of professional standards as illustrated by the direction of the arrow in Figure 7.2 is not straightforward. Identifying a mechanism is necessary to redress the outward-focused imbalance of an excessive quality assurance agenda and negative public politics about the teaching profession. In the active professional space, teachers are afforded the conditions to fuel the passion and commitment that motivates them, as well as the agency and autonomy to make the fine-

grained professional judgements in favour of their students that is the hallmark of teacher professional autonomy. Active professionalism captures the ‘inside’ responsibilities and accountabilities that are meaningful to teachers (Section 6.10, p. 192). This thesis makes a contribution to scholarship by building on Sachs’ (2003a) concept of active professionalism and contextualising it within the intersubjective space between teachers and professional standards.



*Figure 7.2: Shifting teachers’ conceptions of professional standards.*

Any mechanism to support teachers’ movement towards an active professionalism must support teachers’ freedom. “Free creation without the arbitrary limiting effects of coercive institutions” (Chomsky & Foucault, 1971/2006, p. 37) is at the heart of the concepts of autonomy, agency (Campbell, 2012), and power over the self (Foucault, 1987). One avenue to freedom is the fostering of an audacious reflexivity as proposed in Section 6.10.2 (p. 200).



The link between critical reflection and ontological freedom has been understood since Hegel (Singer, 1983) yet is often ignored. Audacious reflexivity is a critical component of ontological freedom which is able to move the teacher to the boundaries of what Foucault (1987) described as “games of truth” (1987, p. 127) of which professional standards are a part. From the boundary, teachers are better able to observe, to understand, and to exert power over the contingencies of professional standards which would otherwise bind them. Audacious reflexivity, then, is a crucial dimension of the self-education associated with the care of the self which is ontologically prior to the care of others which quality teaching demands (Section 4.1.3, p. 117).

A possible corrective mechanism which has been discussed and rejected is the codification of teacher dispositions (Section 6.9.1, p. 189). The sample of teacher dispositions catalogued in Appendix S is not a definitive list. Even if it were, the codification of teacher dispositions would face the objections of teachers, who are not inspired by the technical, compliance lists of professional standards documents. The nourishing of teacher dispositions calls for a different mode of engagement with teachers other than technical codification. Consistent with the construction of active professionalism proposed in this thesis, any mechanism would need to support strong personal agency, suggesting that the mechanism needs to be constructed by teachers themselves. A mechanism to nourish teacher dispositions would also need to inspire quality improvement, the second axis of active professionalism, suggesting a focus on teachers’ self-improvement. Foucault’s work on the ethics of the care of the self fulfils these criteria and provides a starting point for the development of an alternative to codification mechanisms for the nourishment of teacher dispositions (Foucault, 1985; 1986; 1987).

As outlined in Section 4.1.3 (p. 117), ethics invite the “exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being” (Foucault, 1987, p. 113). In the current research, teachers have made it clear that the ontological “mode of being” that they seek finds expression in teacher dispositions. Foucault makes clear the link between personal liberty and the seeking after “a certain mode of being” when he says further: “Liberty is the ontological condition of ethics” (1987, p. 115). In educational terms, an ethics

of teaching, developed by teachers, would provide the framework to achieve the degree of autonomy that is possible within the confines of a neoliberal educational ecology. An ethics of teaching would balance relations of power, knowledge and public good to underpin the professionalism of teaching (Beaton, 2010).

If indeed “ethics is the deliberate form assumed by liberty” (Foucault, 1987, p. 115) and, as has been argued in this thesis, teacher dispositions are the ontological dimension of teaching, it follows that the expression of teacher dispositions is (a) an expression of the ontological condition of ethics, (b) an expression of freedom (autonomy), and (c) an expression of the teacher as her/his authentic self. The teacher dispositions sample of Appendix S are nothing if not an expression of the human person that teachers aspire to *be* and are therefore a tentative exploration of a teacher ethics of the care of the self—who the teacher needs to be in order to care for others.

Professional standards generally under-emphasise ethics. Yet it is through ethics and the moral purpose that they imbue that teachers who are weak in their motivations to teach can be challenged, those with potential can be encouraged in their growth, and those who are audacious and courageous can be affirmed (Fullan, 1993). The AITSL Standards merely reference teachers’ responsibilities to meet the ethical standards set by schools, systems and agencies, to “maintain high ethical standards” and to “model exemplary ethical behaviour” (BOSTES, 2015a, Standard 7.1). Even if strengthened, these statements would not be sufficient; the key point of the previous paragraphs is that a statement of teachers’ ethics must derive from the teaching profession itself, not from the agencies of government.

#### **7.6.1. Transferability of the research**

The case for this study has been secondary schools in a high performing system. A high performing system provides a set of positive and stable cultural and educational background conditions in which to test the aspirational limits of professional standards. This study, therefore, contains knowledge of high value to the teaching profession both in Australia and other jurisdictions. The findings and conclusions of this study provide useful insights into the

limits of instrumentalist professional standards, while offering a direction for the exploration of aspirational alternative mechanisms to support and foster passionate and committed active professional teachers.

## **7.7. RESPONSE TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Having drawn together the elements of this study in the conclusions discussed thus far in this chapter, we are in a position to respond to the research questions posed at the conclusion of the opening chapter of this thesis. As the answers to the research subquestions inform the response to the main research question, they will be addressed first.

### **7.7.1. Research subquestion 1**

The first research subquestion is: What are the contesting teacher conceptions of professional standards? This thesis has shown that secondary school teachers within a high performing school system in fact express a range of conceptions about the place of professional standards in their teaching. The conceptions that teachers have of the place of professional standards, and the relationship of those conceptions to one another and to the work and context of teachers, were mapped in the phenomenographic outcome space that emerged from the research findings (Figure 5.3, p. 156). The outcome space of this study mapped teachers' conceptions of professional standards within quadrants which have quality assurance and quality improvement on the horizontal axis, and strong and weak agency on the vertical axis. The conception of professional standards that would result in the greatest impact of professional standards, namely, the quadrant of strong teacher agency and emphasis on quality improvement, is found to be the conception of professional standards least held by participants in the study. This is of concern to the teaching profession, not least of all because one might reasonably expect that a case study of a high performing school system provides the optimal conditions in which professional standards might impact on teachers. It is reasonable to conclude that where the conditions of teaching are less than optimal, even greater levels of resistance and resignation might be found in teachers' responses to professional standards.

### 7.7.2. Research subquestion 2

The second research subquestion is: How do teachers negotiate the contesting discourses operating within professional standards? This thesis has indicated that teachers are subjected to a high accountability environment, a dimension of the contemporary neoliberal ecology of education. During the research interviews for this study, participants focused on discussing the distracting excesses of compliance and accountability regimes in their work more than any other topic. Participants exercised their own power in response to these conditions, characterised typically as strategies of resistance in this study's outcome space (Figure 5.3, p. 156). Teachers' strategies of resistance were both negative and positive, but whichever the case, this thesis affirms the view that teachers' *enactment* of professional standards is different in character to the *implementation* intentions of policymakers. At the most positive level, teachers resignify professional standards to accord with their own priorities in teaching, not those of policymakers. At its most powerful, that resignification transforms the notion of accountability from an outward accountability to those who govern teaching, to an inward accountability to 'the masters that matter'— their students, their parents, and their immediate colleagues in the local school setting.

### 7.7.3. Research subquestion 3

The third research subquestion is: How do professional standards impact on the professional that teachers become? The research participants in this study made frequent references to the qualities of the exemplary teacher. It is found that these qualities are a range of teacher dispositions that reside within the ontological dimension of teaching (Appendix S). The strongly relational nature of teaching highlights the importance of the development of teacher dispositions, which teachers see as quintessential to their emerging personhood as a practitioner–professional. It is further found that teacher dispositions in the ontological domain are absent from the AITSL Standards in particular and similar professional standards in general. While this situation persists, without some balancing mechanism that allows teachers to articulate the 'heart' of teaching, professional standards will only impact on the

professional that teachers become in as much as they diminish, rather than enrich the person, because an impoverished conception of a teacher inheres them.

#### **7.7.4. Main research question**

The main research question is: What is the impact of professional standards on the teaching profession? The responses to the research subquestions offered above lead to the conclusion that the claim that “standards contribute to the professionalisation of teaching and raise the status of the profession” (BOSTES, 2015a, p. 3) is not sustained. Teachers remained unconvinced of the rhetoric that the AITSL Standards, as an accreditation system, “will position the profession to improve student outcomes and also result in teachers being more highly valued in the community” (BOSTES, 2015, p. 1). The professional standards which were the object of this case study, namely the AITSL Standards, are representative of similar styles of professional standards in other jurisdictions, such as the US and the UK. It has been shown that while the AITSL Standards identify that which a teacher knows and is able to do (the epistemological dimensions of teaching), they ignore the human person which the teacher becomes (the ontological dimension of teaching). The findings of this thesis indicate the high degree of importance that teachers place upon the ontological dimension of teaching. The missing ontological dimension of teaching in the AITSL Standards and similarly constructed professional standards mitigate against their powerful impact on the teaching profession. They may be, as their advocates claim, necessary for the ongoing sophistication of teaching practice but they are, however, not sufficient in their current form to improve teacher quality. It is argued in this thesis that teachers cannot genuinely best care for others, primarily their students, until such time as they exercise an authentic care of the self, which is essentially an exercise of teacher ethics that reassert the moral purpose over and above the technical dimensions of their work, the latter which are the primary focus of professional standards documents. It will be suggested in Section 7.8 which follows immediately, that an ongoing ethics narrative needs to be established *by* teachers, *for* teachers, that reasserts the ethical heart of teaching. Such an ethics narrative needs to engage in an exploration of the teacher dispositions which enliven the heart of this person-centred profession. A strong ethics

narrative by teachers requires an active professionalism (Section 6.10.3, p. 202), within which teachers exercise an audacious reflexivity (Section 6.10.2, p. 200), which challenges the technical rationality of contemporary accountability and compliance mechanisms. While the concrete form which such an ethics narrative might take is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is hoped that this work stimulates further discussion among teachers about how such an ethics narrative might be initiated and sustained.

## **7.8. RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE STUDY**

This thesis has argued that instrumentalist professional standards like the AITSL Standards are not sufficient to bring about an aspirational improvement in teacher quality. It is widely acknowledged that improving teacher quality requires a multifaceted approach (Dinham, 2013b), but what has not yet been acknowledged in the variety of discourses about professional standards is that nurturing the aspirations of the teaching profession through attention to the ontological dimension of teachers' work is possible and necessary.

The metrification of teacher dispositions is rejected in favour of the building of an ethics narrative by teachers. Ethics narrative building for the profession by the profession is a role for teachers in academic governance that both accords with teachers' interest in strong personal agency, inward-focused to their work within their school, and which is possible and realistic within the confines of a neoliberal education ecology. Ethics narrative building would complement existing instrumentalist professional standards to redress the quality assurance imbalance. An ethics narrative would recognise and honour the messy complexity of the human and moral decisions that teachers face in their daily work and which are beyond the scope of technical solutions. The active professionalism outlined in Section 6.10.3 (p. 202) serves as a foundational basis and an aspirational ideal on which to build an ethics narrative for the teaching profession.

### **7.8.1. The role of school leadership**

Participants in this study noted the importance of local school leadership in supporting their

efforts to be the best teaching professionals that they could be. Allied to this point was teachers' observation that the context in which one taught was significant, and a teacher who might be highly effective in one school setting may struggle to be effective in another, a point supported in the literature (Scott & Dinham, 2008; Wragg, et al., 2010). These points highlight the important role that local school leadership might play in nourishing teachers' growth in personal agency. There is a need for school leaders to take on the task at which other agencies have disappointed, "to construct spaces and places where teachers could be imaginative, autonomous or collaborative" (Parr, 2010, p. 111). Correspondingly, school systems need the courage to affirm, encourage and support their school leaders to undertake this task. This is an area that deserves further attention.

### **7.8.2. The role of professional leadership**

The aspiration of educationalists who have called for professional standards for teachers "by the profession, for the profession" (Ingvarson, 2014, p. 385) have been thwarted in the Australian context by instrumentalist professional standards controlled by AITSL, an agency that is not fully at-arm's-length from government (Ingvarson, 2013). In the wake of these realities, there is a dearth of national professional leadership which is focused on the interests of classroom teachers. Monteiro notes that:

The profession does not care for itself when teachers are not the best advocates of their cause... A symptom of that is the broad lack of awareness of the importance of Professional Ethics in education, as well as teachers' lack of appetite for a self-governing body.  
(Monteiro, 2015, p. 26)

Professional ethics cannot end with an ethical statement, because any codified statement, of itself, will not engage teachers in the ongoing ethics conversation that is necessary to encourage the audacious reflexivity that will inspire them (Palmer, 2007; 2008). An ethics narrative needs to be ongoing because the truth teachers tell about themselves always will be contingent upon the historically-formed rationality of their reflexivity (Butler, 2005; Foucault, 1988a). An ethics narrative that is an ongoing conversation is subject to review and revision,

which serve to counter its ever-present contingency. The newly instituted College of Teaching in England holds some promise (PTI, 2014) as does the model of the independent General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS, 2012; c. 2012). Another model that exists is the ethical committee of the Trade Union of Education in Finland, which has produced a statement of *A Teacher's Ethical Principles* (OAJ, 2013), but in addition to this codified ethical principles document, the OAJ also continues to make statements on ethical issues connected to education and the work of teachers. The transformation of trade unions into teacher professional associations is well developed in other Scandinavian countries besides Finland, for example in Sweden (Lilja, 2014) and Norway (Mausethagen & Granlund, 2012). In many jurisdictions, however, the work and image of trade unions is so polarised that such an agency cannot do the work of professional leadership. In Australia, *Action Now*, the report of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) (2014) made 38 recommendations to the federal government, all but one of which were accepted (Australian Government, 2015). The one recommendation not accepted was the proposal for a reconstituted AITSL to manage accreditation processes. In its rationale for rejecting the proposal, the Australian government stated that it “does not believe establishing a new body will necessarily deliver better quality assurance nationally” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 5). What was lost in the translation of this opportunity is buried in the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) original submission to TEMAG on the proposal: “an Australian Centre for the Teaching Profession, *independently established and managed by the Profession* [emphasis added]” (ACDE, 2014, p. 1).

### **7.8.3. Rethinking teacher accreditation against standards**

While compliance may be an inevitable requirement of accountabilities for the expenditure of public monies out of which teachers' salaries are largely paid, the focus of professional standards on compliance will never inspire the teaching profession to excellence. Compliance minimises risk, it never fosters greatness. A movement away from a quality assurance rhetoric by government and its agencies is required in order to alter the current discourse emphasis in professional standards towards quality improvement. Scottish accreditation reforms have met



with virtually no resistance from teachers, framed as they are in terms of ‘PU’ (Professional Update) rather than accreditation; “it’s not about proving but improving” (Watson & Fox, 2015, p. 138). This thesis has raised the possibility that accountability is meaningful and empowering for teachers when it is directed towards the right masters—the children and the communities that they serve at the local level. The resignification of accountability remains a task for AITSL in the Australian context, a task which may prove difficult under the weight of government accountability rhetoric.

#### **7.8.4. Recommendations for further research**

New South Wales (NSW) is the first and only state in Australia to link professional standards to teachers’ pay structures in NSW schools across the school education sectors. The implications of this connection warrants investigation in the future.

This thesis has used as its subject urban secondary teachers in Catholic system schools in Sydney. Further research into other sectors—rural, government, independent and primary schools may serve to further validate these findings.

The sometimes radical difference between, on the one hand, the perceptions and intentions of policymakers and their policy implementation plans and, on the other hand, the reception of policy expressed through teachers enactments of it, has been explored in some degree in this thesis. This area is under-researched and remains a fertile ground for further examination.

This research has shown that teachers are alive to ethical and professional issues. Indeed, teachers have demonstrated that they are thinking deeply about the ethical and exemplary teacher beyond the limits of the AITSL discourse on teacher professionalism. This research has chartered a course that identifies teachers’ valid and useful potential for contributing to building a professional ethics narrative, as in other jurisdictions such as Ontario (Section 1.2.1.7.1, p. 18) and Finland (Section 7.8.2, 221). This thesis has proposed that the building of an ethics narrative of teachers by teachers is important for the profession. An exploration of

what form such an ethics narrative might take is beyond the scope of this thesis and remains a topic for future research .

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**NOTE ON INTERNET REFERENCES**

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of links to documents on the Internet.

Generally, and especially for long and difficult to transcribe Internet addresses (URLs), the Google URL shortener *goo.gl* has been used, for example, *http://goo.gl/r0ha0V*. This produces an easy to transcribe URL for reader retrieval purposes. The *goo.gl* URL shortcut will automatically resolve to the full URL when entered in an Internet web browser address bar.

Due to the transitory nature of the Internet, some document URL references, present on the Internet at the time of writing, will produce dead links. This is particularly the case with government or statutory authority documents, which are frequently removed by successive administrations.

In cases where URLs are dead links, documents can still be retrieved through use of the Internet Archive's 'Wayback Machine' (*https://archive.org/web/*). Enter the resolved URL (the URL which produced the dead link) into the Wayback Machine's search bar. Selecting either 'Latest' or a particular date will deliver an archived version of the document sought.

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## APPENDIX A

**Accreditation at Professional Standards Voluntary Higher Career Stages**

The purpose of Table A.1 is to demonstrate the slow and unimproving rates of teacher accreditation at voluntary higher career stages over a six year period, 2008–2013.

*Appendix Table A.1: Accreditation at higher career stages*

Number of teachers accredited at Professional Accomplishment or Professional Leadership under NSW Teacher Standards 2008-2012 (as at 21 August 2012) <sup>9</sup>	50 <sup>10</sup>
Total teachers NSW 2012 (ABS, 2015)	125011
Percentage of all NSW teachers accredited at voluntary levels	<b>0.04%</b>
Number of teachers accredited at Highly Accomplished or Lead under AITSL Standards, (as at 31 December 2013)	159 (AITSL, 2014)
Total teachers Australia 2013 (ABS, 2015)	448711
Percentage of all Australian teachers accredited at voluntary levels	<b>0.04%</b>

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9. The 2012-2013 AITSL Annual Report notes: “A Deeming Advisory Committee was established by AITSL to review existing systems of certification for equivalence to the national system. The New South Wales and Northern Territory governments nominated their existing systems, which have been deemed equivalent to the national process” (AITSL, 2014a, p.32). This fact allows for the consideration of teacher accreditation data at the two voluntary higher career stages dating back to 2008, when voluntary accreditation was first made available under the NSW Professional Teaching Standards. The AITSL Standards largely mimic the NSW standards, enabling reasonable data comparison.

10. Data derived from information supplied by the NSW Institute of Teachers under Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (Freedom of Information). For application, see Appendix T (p. 324).

## APPENDIX B

## Principal Information Letter



Australian Catholic University Limited  
 ABN 15 050 192 660  
 Strathfield Campus  
 25a Barker Road Strathfield  
 New South Wales 2135 Australia  
 Telephone 97014035  
 Facsimile 97014034  
 Email [roger.vallance@acu.edu.au](mailto:roger.vallance@acu.edu.au)  
[www.acu.edu.au](http://www.acu.edu.au)

## INFORMATION LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

**TITLE OF PROJECT: Teachers' experience of AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: A case study of the enactment of teaching standards in a high performing school system**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Roger Vallance**

**STUDENT RESEARCHER: Adam John Taylor**

Dear Principal,

I would like to invite you and your school to participate in a research project to investigate teachers' experience of the Australia Institute of Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (National Standards). The purpose of this research is to identify and explore the ways in which teachers perceive, negotiate and enact National Standards in their work.

I intend to approach a number of secondary schools within Sydney CEO, in particular, those schools that have engaged in some way to date with AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the National Standards). One of the ways in which schools have engaged with the National Standards is through the use of *MyPL* as an online PPPR tool.

The commitment that is being sought from you is to encourage the voluntary commitment of teachers identified by you. The particular teachers being sought are teachers in non-executive positions of at least four years standing in the profession. Maximum variety is being sought in the teacher sample, considering factors such as teachers' gender, 'New Scheme' status, their personal educational attainment and their role within the school.

The commitment to this research project for voluntary participating teachers will be a single one-on-one 60 minute interview. A research assistant involved in the project will conduct the interview. The research assistant will be a recently retired secondary school principal.

This research project is of minimal risk to teacher participants. If, however, any participant feels emotionally uncomfortable or in any other way distressed in the course of the interview, they will be able to terminate the interview immediately without incurring any negative consequences.

Interviews will be digitally recorded and participants will be prompted to share their thoughts and feelings about the National Standards and the current and potential future impact of the National Standards on their work and on the work of the teaching profession generally. There is no expectation that any participant is an expert on the National Standards. There will be no further demand on teachers' time beyond the 60 minute interview. The interview will be conducted in a mutually convenient location on your workplace campus. Throughout the data collection, all efforts will be made to minimise disruptions to school activities, which at all times will take precedence.



It is anticipated that this project will commence in the Term 2, 2014 and will continue throughout the term. It is anticipated that the research assistant would be on campus at your school one day a week for eight weeks in the term, completing two to three interviews each day.

You may cease your involvement in this project at any time, wholly at your discretion and without explanation.

Results of the research project will be published in the Doctoral thesis of the student researcher. Results may also be published in academic or professional journals or reported in CEO forums. These results will not identify participants or your school in any way. There are no immediate or personal benefits which will accrue to you as a result of your involvement in this project. More generally however, your involvement holds the potential to contribute to a better understanding of how teachers engage with the National Standards and the influence of the National Standards on teachers' work and teacher professionalism now and in the future. An offer without obligation for a brief presentation to your teaching staff on some of the directions and implications of the research that emerge from the overall analysis of the interview data is cordially made to you.

The participation of all people will be fully voluntary. Data will be carefully safeguarded to ensure that the identity of all participants remains confidential. We anticipate there will be no risk to the participants, and no pressure will be put on any participant at any stage. Participants may withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Investigator and/or the Student Researcher:

**Principal Investigator**

Name: Dr Roger Vallance  
Telephone: 97014455  
School: Education  
Campus Address: 25a Barker Road  
Strathfield, NSW 2135

**Student Researcher**

Name: Adam Taylor  
Telephone: 9808 1033  
School: Holy Cross College  
Address: 517 Victoria Road  
Ryde, NSW 2112

This research project has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics  
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)  
Australian Catholic University  
North Sydney Campus  
PO Box 968  
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059  
Ph.: 02 9739 2519  
Fax: 02 9739 2870  
Email: [res.ethics@acu.edu.au](mailto:res.ethics@acu.edu.au)

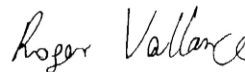
Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If you are willing that your school participate in this research about Teachers' experience of AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, could I ask that you read the accompanying Consent Form. This form does not commit your staff to volunteer for this research, but does indicate your approval that staff be invited to voluntarily participate in this research. Please sign one copy of the Consent Form for School Principal and return this signed copy to me, and keep one copy for your records.

Yours sincerely,



.....  
Adam Taylor



.....  
Dr Roger Vallance

## APPENDIX C

## Principal Consent Form



Australian Catholic University Limited  
 ABN 15 050 192 660  
 Strathfield Campus  
 25a Barker Road Strathfield  
 New South Wales 2135 Australia  
 Telephone 97014035  
 Facsimile 97014034  
 Email roger.vallance@acu.edu.au  
 www.acu.edu.au

**Consent Form for School Principal**  
 (Researcher's copy)

**Teachers' experience of AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers**

**Name of Principal Investigator: Dr Roger Vallance**

I, ....., (Principal's name) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Principal. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my staff may, if they wish, participate in the following:

- interviews concerning their perceptions about AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

I realise that I may withdraw any and all participants from this evaluation process at any time.  
 I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify any member of the school community in any personal way.

**Name of principal:** .....

**School:** .....

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

*Roger Vallance*

**Signature of principal investigator:**

**Date:** .....

*CA Bafu*

**Signature of principal investigator:**

**Date:** .....

## APPENDIX D

## 2014 66N Ethics Application Approval



Human Research Ethics Committee  
**Committee Approval Form**

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** Dr Roger Vallance

**Co-Investigators:**

**Student Researcher:** : Mr Adam Taylor

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**

Teachers' experience of AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: A case study of the enactment of teaching standards in a high performing school system

**for the period:** 17/03/2014-30/06/2014 (extended to 31/12/2014)

**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** 2014 66N

**Special Condition/s of Approval**

**Prior to commencement of your research**, the following permissions are required to be submitted to the ACU HREC:

Catholic Education Office, Sydney and School Principals

**The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (2007) apply:**

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  - security of records
  - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  - proposed changes to the protocol
  - unforeseen circumstances or events
  - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

*K. Paskey*

Signed: .....

..... Date: .... 05/01/2015.....

(Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

## APPENDIX E

## Australian Catholic University Extension of Ethics Approval



Taylor, Adam &lt;adam.taylor@hccryde.nsw.edu.au&gt;

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**2014 66N Extension approved**

---

**Ms Kylie Pashley** <Kylie.Pashley@acu.edu.au>

18 July 2014 09:05

To: Dr Roger Vallance &lt;roger.vallance@acu.edu.au&gt;, Adam Taylor &lt;ajtayl002@myacu.edu.au&gt;

Cc: Ms Kylie Pashley &lt;Kylie.Pashley@acu.edu.au&gt;

Dear Roger,

Ethics Register Number : 2014 66N

Project Title : Teachers' experience of AITSL's Australian Professional  
Standards for Teachers: A case study of the enactment of teaching standards  
in a high performing school system

Data Collection Date Extended : 31/12/2014

Thank you for returning the Ethics Progress Report for your project.

The Deputy Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your  
request to extend the period of data collection. The new expiry date for  
data collection is the 31/12/2014 .

We wish you well in this ongoing project.

Kind regards,  
Ms Kylie PashleyEthics Officer | Research Services  
Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)  
Australian Catholic University  
PO Box 456, Virginia, QLD, 4014  
T: 07 3623 7429 F: 07 3623 7328

THIS IS AN AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED RESEARCHMASTER EMAIL

## APPENDIX F

## Catholic Education Office Sydney Ethics Approval

Catholic Education Office **Sydney**  
www.ceosyd.catholic.edu.au



27 March 2014

Ref: Research Application 881

Mr Adam Taylor  
35 Margaret Street  
STANMORE NSW 2048

Dear Adam,

RE: RESEARCH APPLICATION REF: 881 – LETTER OF APPROVAL

Thank you for the submission of your application to conduct research in Archdiocesan Catholic Schools under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Education Office (CEO) Sydney. Approval is given by CEO Sydney to conduct this study. **This approval is granted subject to full compliance with NSW Child Protection and Commonwealth Privacy Act legislation.** It is the prerogative of any Principal or staff member whom you might approach to decline your invitation to be involved in this study or to withdraw from involvement at any time. Any study involving the participation of students will require written, informed consent by parents/guardians.

Permission is given for you to approach the Principals of the schools nominated, listed below, requesting participants for your study: ***“Teachers’ experience of AITSL’s Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: A case study of the enactment of teaching standards in a high performing school system”.***

Marcellin College, Randwick  
St Ursula’s College, Kingsgrove  
Champagnat Catholic College, Pagewood  
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College, Kensington  
Trinity Catholic College, Auburn  
Southern Cross Catholic Vocational College, Burwood  
Marist College Penshurst

Br David Hall, fms  
Ms Anne Anderson  
Mr David McInnes  
Mrs Jenny Fowler  
Mr John Robinson  
Mr Patrick O’Reilly  
Mr John Finneran

#### COMMONWEALTH PRIVACY ACT

The privacy of the school and that of any school personnel or students involved in your study must, of course, be preserved at all times and comply with requirements under the Commonwealth Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000. In complying with this legislation, the CEO Sydney has decided that individual research participants should not be identified in the report.

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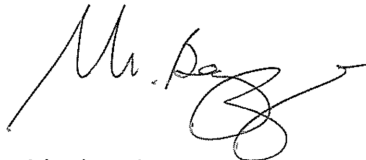
**FURTHER REQUIREMENTS**

It is a condition of approval that when your research has been completed you will forward a **summary report of the findings and/or recommendations** to this office as soon as results are to hand.

**All correspondence relating to this Research should note 'Ref: Research Application 881'.**

Please contact me at this office if there is any further information you require. I wish you well in this undertaking and look forward to learning about your findings.

Yours sincerely,

 (at last!)

**Dr Michael Bezzina**  
**Director of Teaching and Learning**  
Email: [research.centre@syd.catholic.edu.au](mailto:research.centre@syd.catholic.edu.au)

## APPENDIX G

**Full particulars of research participants**

Table G.1 records the full particulars of the research participants in this study. The records are listed in the order in which in which participants were interviewed.

*Appendix Table G.1: Full particulars of research participants*

<i>Participant pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>School pseudonym</i>	<i>Number of Years Teaching</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Role</i>
Mary	Female	St Baldwin's	10-19	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Michael	Male	St Baldwin's	4-9	New Scheme	Year Coordinator
Maria	Female	St Baldwin's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Other Middle Leader
Claire	Female	St Abigail's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Greg	Male	St Abigail's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Paulo	Male	St Abigail's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	KLA Head
Sara	Female	St Abigail's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	KLA Head
Olivia	Female	St Abigail's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Maree	Female	St Abigail's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	KLA Head
Charles	Male	St Abigail's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	KLA Head
Phillip	Male	St Abigail's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Anthony	Male	St Day's	10-19	New Scheme	Other Middle Leader
Alison	Female	St Day's	10-19	New Scheme	Year Coordinator
Bernard	Male	St Day's	30+	Pre-New Scheme	Year Coordinator
Elizabeth	Female	St Baldwin's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	Year Coordinator
Susan	Female	St Baldwin's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Paul	Male	St Baldwin's	10-19	New Scheme	Other Middle Leader
Joe	Male	St Baldwin's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Roger	Male	St Abigail's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Bernice	Female	St Abigail's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Chiara	Female	St Abigail's	10-19	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Alan	Male	St Abigail's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Luke	Male	St Baldwin'	10-19	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Sarah	Female	St Baldwin'	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
James	Male	St Baldwin'	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Debbie	Female	St Day's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	KLA Head
Ruby	Female	St Day's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Kathryn	Female	St Day's	4-9	New Scheme	Other Middle Leader
Billi	Female	St Day's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Liviana	Female	St Day's	4-9	New Scheme	Other Middle Leader
Alicia	Female	St Day's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	KLA Head
Carmel	Female	St Fabian's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Bridget	Female	St Fabian's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Other Middle Leader
Paris	Female	St Fabian's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Rosalind	Female	St Day's	10-19	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Catherine	Female	St Day's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	Year Coordinator

*Table continued*

<i>Participant pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>School pseudonym</i>	<i>Number of Years Teaching</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Role</i>
Xanthi	Female	St Day's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	Other Middle Leader
Renata	Female	St Charity's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	KLA Head
Valeria	Female	St Charity's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Nichola	Female	St Charity's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Kirsty	Female	St Charity's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Kristen	Female	St Charity's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Kent	Male	St Charity's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Terri	Female	St Charity's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Gloria	Female	St Charity's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Saxon	Male	St Charity's	4-9	New Scheme	Other Middle Leader
Marilyn	Female	St Charity's	10-19	New Scheme	Year Coordinator
Una	Female	St Charity's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Philomena	Female	St Charity's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Sergius	Male	St Giles'	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Tim	Male	St Giles'	10-19	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Seraphina	Female	St Giles'	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Claudia	Female	St Fabian's	4-9	New Scheme	Other Middle Leader
Yago	Male	St Fabian's	30+	Pre-New Scheme	KLA will Head
Nata	Female	St Giles'	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Charlotte	Female	St Giles'	10-19	New Scheme	KLA Head
Ulric	Male	St Giles'	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Gretel	Female	St Giles'	10-19	New Scheme	KLA Head
Mitch	Male	St Giles'	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Harry	Male	St Edbert's	30+	Pre-New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Garfield	Male	St Edbert's	30+	New Scheme	KLA Head
Tegan	Female	St Edbert's	30+	Pre-New Scheme	KLA Head
Hugh	Male	St Edbert's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Boris	Male	St Edbert's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Konrad	Male	St Edbert's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Teresa	Female	St Fabian's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	KLA Head
Catriona	Female	St Fabian's	20-29	Pre-New Scheme	Non regular classroom teacher
Colleen	Female	St Fabian's	4-9	New Scheme	Classroom Teacher
Sean	Male	St Fabian's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Year Coordinator
Daragh	Male	St Fabian's	4-9	New Scheme	Other Middle Leader
Nell	Female	St Fabian's	10-19	Pre-New Scheme	Year Coordinator



## APPENDIX H

## Participant Information Letter



## INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Ethics Register Number:

**PROJECT TITLE:** Teachers' experience of AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: A case study of the enactment of teaching standards in a high performing school system

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr Roger Vallance

**STUDENT RESEARCHER:** Adam John Taylor

**STUDENT'S DEGREE:** EdD

Australian Catholic University Limited  
ABN 15 050 192 660  
Strathfield Campus  
25a Barker Road Strathfield  
New South Wales 2135 Australia  
Telephone 97014035  
Facsimile 97014034  
Email S00070578@myacu.edu.au  
www.acu.edu.au

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a case study research project investigating teachers' experience of the Australia Institute of Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (National Standards). The purpose of this research is to identify and explore the ways in which teachers perceive, negotiate and enact National Standards in their work. Your perceptions about the place of the National Standards in your work and in the teaching profession generally will be investigated in this study.

This project is being conducted by Adam Taylor and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Education at Australian Catholic University under the supervision of Doctor Roger Vallance. Your commitment to this research project is agreeing to take part in a single one-on-one 60 minute interview. A research assistant involved in the project will conduct the interview.

This research project is of minimal risk to you the participant. If, however, you feel emotionally uncomfortable or in any other way distressed in the course of the interview, you may terminate the interview immediately without incurring any negative consequences.

The interview will be digitally recorded and you will be prompted to share your thoughts and feelings about the National Standards and the current and potential future impact of the National Standards on your work and on the work of the teaching profession generally. There is no expectation that you are an expert on the National Standards. There will be no further demand on your time beyond the 60 minute interview. The interview will be conducted in a mutually convenient location on your workplace campus.

There are no immediate or personal benefits which will accrue to you as a result of your involvement as a participant in this project. More generally however, your involvement holds the potential to contribute to a better understanding of how teachers engage with the National Standards and the influence of the National Standards on teachers' work and teacher professionalism now and in the future.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without justification and without adverse consequences. You may also choose to withdraw your data from the research project as well.

The data reported in the research findings will be non-identifiable. No names or personal identifiers will be used and data excerpts will be decontextualized, minimising any risk to your confidentiality. The variety of different



conceptions about the National Standards will be reported, supported by excerpts from interviews. The research data also will be retained within a single, secure research database to protect your confidentiality. It is not planned to routinely return transcripts to participants as the transcription process is rigorous. If, however, you wish to have a copy of your interview transcript this will be posted to you upon your request.

Results of the research project will be published in the Doctoral thesis of the student researcher. Results may also be published in academic or professional journals or reported in CEO forums. An offer without obligation for a brief presentation to your teaching staff on some of the directions and implications of the research that emerge from the overall analysis of the interview data will also be made to your school.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Investigator and/or the Student Researcher:

**Principal Investigator**

Name: Dr Roger Vallance

Telephone: 97014455

School: Education

Campus Address: 25a Barker Road Strathfield, NSW 2135

**Student Researcher**

Name: Adam Taylor

Telephone: 9808 1033

School: Holy Cross College

Address: 517 Victoria Road Ryde, NSW 2112

This research project has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics  
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)  
Australian Catholic University  
North Sydney Campus  
PO Box 968  
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059  
Ph.: 02 9739 2519  
Fax: 02 9739 2870  
Email: [res.ethics@acu.edu.au](mailto:res.ethics@acu.edu.au)

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this research, please sign two copies of the Consent Form; retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Investigator or Student researcher. You can do this either directly or via your Principal or nominated delegate.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Taylor

Dr Roger Vallance

**APPENDIX I**  
**Participant Consent Form**



**ACU|education**   
Transforming learning communities

**CONSENT FORM**

*Copy for researcher*

TITLE OF PROJECT: Teachers' Experience of AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

ETHICS REGISTER NUMBER: 2014 66N

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr Roger Vallance

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Adam Taylor

I ..... have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this one hour digitally recorded interview, realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time and without any consequences. My data may be withdrawn if my consent is withdrawn. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: .....

SIGNATURE .....

DATE .....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:.....

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: .....

DATE:.....

Australian Catholic University Limited  
ABN 15 050 192 660  
Strathfield Campus  
25a Barker Road Strathfield  
New South Wales 2135 Australia  
Telephone 97014035  
Facsimile 97014034  
Email [roger.vallance@acu.edu.au](mailto:roger.vallance@acu.edu.au)  
[www.acu.edu.au](http://www.acu.edu.au)

**APPENDIX J****Interview Guide****1. Welcome and warm up**

- Personal introduction. Who am I?
- Purpose of the interview. This research is about...
- Background to this research
  - Researcher's name—Adam Taylor
  - Institution: Australian Catholic University
  - Doctoral studies
  - Explain why this participant has been selected

Suggested script:

*I am NAME and I am helping Adam Taylor who is researching Teachers' perceptions of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Adam contacted NAME OF PRINCIPAL and he suggested you and a number of other people. We want to hear about your views, your experiences, your gut feelings; we want to get your take on this...*

- Reassurance regarding confidentiality and anonymity
- Reiterate voluntary nature of interview and that participant can withdraw at any time
- Ask: *Would you like to ask any questions about that?*
- Seek permission to audio-record

**2. Participant background**

- How long have you been teaching?
- Ascertain and record if teacher is a New Scheme teacher or not
- Role in the school

Suggested script:

*So tell me a bit about yourself as a teacher...*

### **3. Reacting to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers**

*Hand the participant a copy of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*

- Would you like to take a minute or two to flick through this?
- Allow a couple of minutes of working / engaged silence
- Have you seen that document before?
- Where did you first hear about the AITSL Standards?
- Has there been some talk about the AITSL Standards at your school?
- ...in that conversation, how did staff feel about it?
- Where do you stand in all of that?

### **4. AITSL and the NSW Institute of Teachers**

- Can you explain to me the difference between New Scheme and Old Scheme Teachers?
- Explore the teacher's perceptions of the relationship between AITSL and the NSW Institute of Teachers
- Explore (with New Scheme teachers) the similarities / differences between their experience of their initial three years (accreditation phase) and the maintenance-of-accreditation phase, following their official accreditation by the NSW Institute of Teachers as Proficient Teachers

Keep asking why—Probe—Make connections—Develop themes

- What was going on there?
- Tell me what was happening
- How did that happen?
- How did you sit with that?
- How did you walk away feeling about that?

## 5. The AITSL Standards and Professional Learning

- In the course of your everyday work, are the AITSL Standards, for you, ‘front of mind’? ‘back of mind’? ‘invisible’?
- The NSW Institute of Teachers distinguishes between Teacher Identified Professional Development and Institute Registered Professional Development, both of which can lead to good professional learning. What can you tell me about that?
- What does teacher identified professional development (on campus or off campus) look like *for you*?
- Do you look to the AITSL Standards to help you in working out your professional learning? Explore.
- Can you describe to me an Aha! moment when reflecting on the Standards have helped you to say “Ah! That’s something I need to think about or do something about...?”
- Do you do any professional learning ‘on campus’?
- Do you work with your colleagues in your professional learning? What does that look like for you?
- What kinds of ‘essential ingredients’ do you think are needed in order to work collaboratively with your colleagues on your own professional learning agenda?  
(Prompt/explore around the themes of risk-taking and trust.)

## 6. The Ontological Dimension of the AITSL Standards

- For you, do the AITSL Standards portray what a teacher should look like?
- Do you think being a teacher has changed you as a person in any way?
- What’s new / missing / helpful in the AITSL Standards?
- What surprised you / was alien to you / was familiar for you about the AITSL Standards?

## 7. So how do you feel about the whole standards agenda?

- What is your sense of the direction being taken in linking promotions positions to the AITSL Standards in the new Enterprise Agreement? Why?
- What is your perspective on the plan for all teachers to be accredited with the NSW Institute of Teachers by 2018? Why?
- In five years' time, where do you think this is all going to be? OR Where do you reckon that the Standards agenda is headed? OR, If you had a crystal ball, what would you say is the future for teaching in a Standards environment? Explore.

**8. How have/will the AITSL Standards change(d) anything?**

- How have the AITSL Standards changed things?
- What's different about teaching now compared to when you began teaching? What part do you reckon the AITSL Standards have played in that change? Explore.

**9. Audience**

- Who needs to hear what we have been talking about? Which group of people?

**10. Wrapping up**

- Let me check over my notes for other questions...
- To finish, is there a 'take away message' that you would like to leave me with? (NB: give people time to think about it...)

## APPENDIX K

## About MyPL

**Online Professional Development Planning Tool**

# MY PL

*Holy Cross College, Ryde*

**Demonstration Teacher: [National Teacher Professional Standards Framework](#)**

**Standard**  
Hover over a Standard below to see Focus Areas

----- **Focus**  
Hover over a Focus Area to see Stages

----- **Career Stage**  
Click the Stage at which you are currently operating

<b>Standard 1:</b> Know students and how they learn <b>Standard 2:</b> Know the content and how to teach it <b>Standard 3:</b> Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning <b>Standard 4:</b> Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments <b>Standard 5:</b> Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning <b>Standard 6:</b> Engage in professional learning <b>Standard 7:</b> Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/ carers and the community	<b>Focus Area 1:</b> Physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students <b>Focus Area 2:</b> Understand how students learn <b>Focus Area 3:</b> Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds <b>Focus Area 4:</b> Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students <b>Focus Area 5:</b> Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities	<b>Graduate:</b> Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students and how these may affect learning. <b>Proficient:</b> Use teaching strategies based on knowledge of students' physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics to improve student learning. <b>Highly Accomplished:</b> Select from a flexible and effective repertoire of teaching strategies to suit the physical, social and intellectual development
--	---	---

*Appendix Figure K.1 Screenshot from MyPL online tool.*

MyPL is an online Professional Learning Tool that has been fully developed by Adam Taylor. The tool takes the participant through a step by step guide which seeks to align a selected AITSL Australian Professional Standard with a school's Strategic Management Plan. It provides a means of connecting participants to a colleague-mentor. The system is integrated to teachers' email accounts. When changes are made to plans by the teacher or his/her mentor, an email alerts the other party to the update.

MyPL provides a starting point for reflection on and discussion of AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and their connection to teachers and their personalised professional learning.



In order to view and work with MyPL, apply the following information:

- url: <http://mypl.syd.catholic.edu.au/>;
- ensure that ad blocking software is turned off in your web browser;
- demonstration username: demo;
- demonstration password: demo
- click on ‘START HERE’ to see the AITSL Standards appear (Appendix Figure K.1);
- follow the onscreen instructions.

## APPENDIX L

## Post Interview Briefing Sheet

**Interviewer Post Interview Briefing Sheet: Research on teachers' perceptions of National Standards**

Interviewer ID		School ID		Participant ID		Gender		New Scheme?	
Date of Interview				Role in school					
Number of years a teacher			Number of years in this school			Conditions for interview			
PARTICIPANT'S DEMEANOUR:	Comfortable?			Chatty?		Distracted		Interruptions?	
Record these particulars on the <i>Interview Particulars</i> Spreadsheet at <a href="http://goo.gl/SPNMVv">http://goo.gl/SPNMVv</a>									

In the space below in your reflections on the content of the interview, particularly note emergent themes and new themes that you discern. What are you hearing? What has surprised you? What have you heard time and time again? What has come out of left field? What's uncomfortable for you? What's new to you?

## APPENDIX M

### Peer Debrief Process

This appendix outlines the peer debrief process undertaken to support the research in this thesis. The outline of each of the sessions conducted is listed in Appendix Table M.1 below. Thereafter, the details of each of the sessions will be discussed in turn.

*Appendix Table M.1: Timeline of peer debrief process*

<i>Session number</i>	<i>Session type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Actual transcript hours recorded</i>	<i>Present</i>
1	Research Assistants Training	3 May 2014	9am–5pm	N/A	Researcher, Supervisor, Research Assistant A (RAA), Research Assistant B (RAB), Research Assistant C (RAC)
2	First post interviews peer debrief	24 May 2014	10am–1pm	2:48:11	Researcher, Supervisor, RAB, RAC
3	Second post interviews peer debrief	19 July 2014	10am–2.30pm	4:02:21	Researcher, Supervisor, RAA, RAB, RAC
4	Third post interviews peer debrief	6 September 2014	10am–2pm	3:09:57	Researcher, Supervisor, RAA, RAB, RAC
5	Researcher presentation to peer group	6 December 2014	8am–3.30pm	4:52:00	Researcher, Supervisor, RAA, RAB
			Total debrief transcript hours recorded	14:52:29	

**Session 1: Research assistants training**

Three research assistants were selected to conduct the interviews with teachers for this research. Each of the research assistants is a recently retired, highly respected, long term secondary school principal with experience of CEO Sydney schools, having worked in them and in similar New South Wales diocesan schools in the course of their careers. While experienced in interviewing and in the skills of developing rapport with interview subjects, they nonetheless required specific training for interviews for phenomenographic research purposes.

A full day's training was held with the research assistants on Saturday 3 May 2014. The training was conducted by the researcher and support was provided by the presence of the research supervisor. In the morning session, research assistants were introduced to the purpose of the research, the role of the research assistant, and interview techniques to support the research purpose. In addition to presentation by data projector slides, snippets of audio recordings of pilot interviews conducted by the researcher in the weeks prior to the training day served as instructive resources to explain the techniques of phenomenographic interviewing: minimal interviewer prompts and input which might otherwise sway or influence the perceptions of the interviewee, and the construction of a 'benign naivety'—presuming to know nothing and have everything explained—so as to draw out deeper or 'gut' views rather than just surface impressions. In the afternoon session, interview techniques were put into practice with mock interview practice sessions followed by debriefing. As a result of the debriefing, the draft *Interview Guide* was further developed (Appendix J).

Resources necessary for the research assistants to conduct their work were discussed and distributed. Each research assistant was given a pair of digital voice recorders and instructed in their use. They were instructed in the procedures to be used for the ethical storing and uploading of audio transcripts to a secure location. Confidentiality expectations were explained and each research assistant signed a *Research Assistant Commitment to*

*Confidentiality Agreement* (Appendix P). Finally, the *Post Interview Briefing Sheet* (Appendix L) was explained and copies distributed. The purpose of the *Post Interview Briefing Sheet* was for the research assistant to record the essential particulars of each research participant interviewed but even more importantly to record their own reflections on the content of interviews, particularly noting themes that they discerned as emergent. These *Post Interview Briefing Sheets* would prove to be rich sources of secondary data for the researcher at subsequent peer debriefing sessions when their contents were discussed by the research assistants.

At the conclusion of this first session, and for each of the subsequent peer debrief sessions, the researcher and supervisor met immediately after the other participants had left in order to informally evaluate the session and plan for future refinements to the process.

## **Session 2: First peer debrief session**

The first peer debrief session was held on Saturday 24 May 2014 after the first 18 interviews had been conducted. An issue raised by one of the research assistants was the nervousness of the participants. It seemed that teachers were somewhat anxious in the lead up to the interviews, concerned that they had to pass a ‘test’ and be very knowledgeable about the object of the case, that is, the AITSL Standards. A useful discussion ensued on teacher fabrication in accountability contexts (Ball, 2003) and the ways that this might be avoided as a threat to future interviews. It was discussed that the best way to do this was getting participants to immerse themselves in the stories of what they actually do as teachers—work which is known to be related to professional standards. It was becoming clear that in the main, teachers were only making oblique references to professional standards but their perceptions were discernible through discussion of what they actually do, think and feel, ascertained through their stories.

Research assistants reported that one of the ways that New Scheme teachers were making explicit reference to professional standards was through their stories of gaining their initial

accreditation matched against the standards and their Accreditation Maintenance journey beyond that. Non-New Scheme teachers did not have that story to tell, but they often had a rich story to tell about how they have seen creeping changes to teaching over the years and how they felt about it.

The session was audio recorded by the researcher and later personally transcribed. The nearly three hours of data recorded, with researchers reflecting upon and discussing what they had heard from participants, provided the research with a rich layer of data additional to the primary data of the teacher-participant interviews. Subsequent peer debrief sessions would also be audio recorded and transcribed, ultimately providing nearly 15 hours of data additional to the teacher interviews, providing a complex, layered data set.

As this session and also at the subsequent two peer debrief sessions, all the *Participant Consent Forms* (Appendix I) and the *Post Interview Briefing Sheets* (Appendix L) completed to date were collected by the researcher for secure storage in accordance with research ethics protocols.

### **Session 3: Second peer debrief session**

The second peer debrief session was held on Saturday 19 July 2014 and followed the pattern of the first peer debrief session. To this point, 50 interviews had been conducted. The reflection and discussion from the interviews conducted by research assistants to this point generated just over four hours of audio recorded and later transcribed data. This session was particularly useful for gaining further insights and reflections from Research Assistant A, who had been overseas for the first peer debrief session. The session allowed for the deepening discussion of emergent themes and ensuring an ongoing consistency in the approach to interviewing between the three research assistants. It also allowed the researcher to continue to monitor and be reflexive about the degree to which the interviewer in the research was interfering with the unreconstructed conceptions of secondary teachers about teacher

professional standards which were being sought as the core data. Such a level of reflexivity would not have been possible if the researcher himself was constituent of the interview process.

#### **Session 4: Third peer debrief session**

The third peer debrief session was held on Saturday 6 September 2014. The remaining 21 (valid) interviews which had not to this point been discussed were gone through in detail. All interviews were completed at this stage. Seventy-seven interviews had been conducted in total, six of which were excluded from the final data set: two pilot interviews by the researcher; one interview because the participant was a member of a school leadership team and thus outside the target sample group; and a further three because they were teachers of less than four years' experience and also outside the target sample group. As in the previous two sessions, the remaining *Participant Consent Forms* (Appendix I) and *Post Interview Briefing Sheets* (Appendix L) were collected by the researcher for secure storage in accordance with research ethics protocols.

This final peer debrief involved a three hour discussion that began to look at the interviews holistically, seeking to elicit reflections from the research assistants about the field of teacher professional standards (and teachers' views of them) in which they had immersed themselves.

#### **Researcher presentation to peer group**

Between the final peer debriefing session on Saturday 6 September 2014 and the *Researcher Presentation to Peer Group* on Saturday 6 December 2014, the following research tasks were completed by the researcher:

1. Transcription completed 26 September 2014
2. Initial coding in NVivo of all transcripts completed 27 September 2014

3. Draft set of the categories of descriptions of teachers' conceptions of the AITSL Standards determined 29 September 2014
4. Three peer debrief sessions transcribed and coded; completed 2 October 2014
5. Holistic relistening and review of each transcript against the draft Categories of Descriptions commenced 6 October 2014
6. Holistic review (second listening) of interview transcripts completed 29 October 2014.

The *Researcher Presentation to Peer Group* involved an extensive presentation of several hours by the researcher to the research supervisor and the research assistants. The presentation summarised the analysis of the data and then advanced a set of 'categories of description', consistent with the phenomenographic approach. The way in which these categories of description described the finite set of ways in which teachers conceived of teacher professional standards was then constructed into an 'outcome space', a phenomenographic term for the way in which the conceptions within the categories of description relate to each other. A series of propositions, addressing the research questions, was then offered for testing by the peer group. The three hour opportunity for reflection which followed on the material presented helped to clarify, develop, and extend the findings of the researcher which are presented in this thesis.



**APPENDIX N****Transcript Proforma**

1. Study Title: Teachers' perceptions of professional standards
2. Interview number:
3. Transcriber name:
4. Interviewer name:
5. Participant ID:
6. Date of interview:
7. Role:
8. New Scheme:
9. Participant gender:

Note to transcriber: transcription must follow the *Transcription Guidelines* for this study.

Commence transcript:

---

## APPENDIX O

**Transcription Guidelines**

1. All transcriptions should follow the format of this study's *Transcription Proforma MS Word* template document. Microsoft *Word* is to be used for the production of all transcripts.
2. The file-naming convention for each transcript is

*Transcript-SchoolID-InterviewerID-interviewnumber.docx*

3. Enter the particulars for the interview in a single opening paragraph, no heading. Include the date of the interview, the interviewer's name, the Participant ID, School ID and other particulars provided.
4. Transcript text is to be set out in a continuous three column table. The first column is the start time of the audio text. The second column is name of the speaker. The third column is the text of the audio content for that speaker. Note that the timings are in the format hhmmss. Leading zeros are not necessary. That is, 0121 means @ 1 min, 21 seconds; 121 means the same thing. There must be a start time entered in every row. Do not leave any trailing rows after the last timed entry.
5. Use the following speaker IDs for the Speaker (second) column:

Interviewer ID for the Interviewer. The interviewer IDs are MA, CD, SA. The interviewer ID will be evident from the audio recording filename.

Participant pseudonym for the Participant. Select a unique pseudonym for each new participant.

6. Transcript text should be set to *Normal* text style. Comments (eg, "unclear") are to be written in red font.
7. Each turn-take should be in a new table-row.
8. Do not number pages and do not use headers and footers in the document
9. In transcribing audio, you may use italics for emphasis, to capture the essence of the spoken word. It is also acceptable to capture pauses (pause) or laughter (laughter) or other apparently relevant data. In the main, however, seek to approach the transcribing task as written language rather than as colloquial speech. Do not use inventive orthology. That is to say, it is not necessary to transcribe every "umm" and "err" and stumble. Use minimal punctuation to deliver the apparent meaning.

## APPENDIX P

## Research Assistant Commitment to Confidentiality Agreement



Australian Catholic University Limited  
ABN 15 050 192 660  
Strathfield Campus  
25a Barker Road Strathfield  
New South Wales 2135 Australia  
Telephone 97014035  
Facsimile 97014034  
Email [roger.vallance@acu.edu.au](mailto:roger.vallance@acu.edu.au)  
[www.acu.edu.au](http://www.acu.edu.au)

## RESEARCH ASSISTANT COMMITMENT TO CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

TITLE OF PROJECT: **Teachers' experience of AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: A case study of the enactment of teaching standards in a high performing school system**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **Dr Roger Vallance**

STUDENT RESEARCHER: **Adam John Taylor**

Dear Research Assistant,

I would like to invite you to participate in the role of Research Assistant in a project to investigate teachers' experience of the Australia Institute of Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (National Standards). The purpose of this research is to identify and explore the ways in which teachers perceive, negotiate and enact National Standards in their work.

I intend to approach a number of secondary schools within Sydney CEO, in particular, those schools that have engaged in some way to date with AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the National Standards). One of the ways in which schools have engaged with the National Standards is through the use of *MyPL* as an online PPPR tool.

The participants of this research are expected to include a number of teachers in non-executive positions of at least four year's standing in the profession. Maximum variety is being sought in the teacher sample, considering factors such as teachers' gender, 'New Scheme' status, their personal educational attainment and their role within the school.

Your role as research assistant will be to conduct the interviews to which you are assigned. Prior to the first interview that you conduct, you will receive training in precisely what is required of you in the interview situation. The commitment to this research project for voluntary participating teachers will be a single one-on-one 60 minute interview. Beyond interviewing, your role includes participation in peer debriefing at regular intervals throughout and at the conclusion of the data collection phase of the project. At all times, you will be expected to maintain the confidentiality of the data that is shared with you by participants and others involved in this research project. Confidentiality concerns the principle that information about research participants is private and may only be revealed with their consent and for the purposes stated in the Consent Form which they have signed, which describes the project's purpose, conduct and reporting in terms similar to what you read here.

It is expected that you will be responsible for digitally recording interviews and participants will be prompted to share their thoughts and feelings about the National Standards and the current and potential future impact of the National Standards on their work and on the work of the teaching profession generally. There is no expectation that any participant is an expert on the National Standards. There will be no further demand on teachers' time beyond the 60 minute interview. The interview will be conducted in a mutually convenient location on the research participant's workplace campus. Throughout the data collection, all efforts must be made to minimise disruptions to school activities, which at all times will take precedence.

It is anticipated that this project will commence in the Term 2, 2014 and will continue throughout the term. It is anticipated that you would be on campus at one or another of the participating schools one day a week for eight weeks in the term, completing two to three interviews each day.

Results of the research project will be published in the Doctoral thesis of the student researcher. Results may also be published in academic or professional journals or reported in CEO forums. Findings will be published under the name of the student researcher. These results will not identify participants or schools in any way. The participation of all people will be fully voluntary. You may cease your involvement in this project at any time, wholly at your discretion and without explanation.

Data will be carefully safeguarded to ensure that the identity of all participants remains confidential. We anticipate there will be no risk to the participants, and no pressure will be put on any participant at any stage. Participants may withdraw at any time without giving a reason. You have a key role to play in ensuring the confidentiality of participants.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Investigator and/or the Student Researcher:

**Principal Investigator**

Name: Dr Roger Vallance  
Telephone: 97014455  
School: Education  
Campus Address: 25a Barker Road  
Strathfield, NSW 2135

**Student Researcher**

Name: Adam Taylor  
Telephone: 9808 1033  
School: Holy Cross College  
Address: 517 Victoria Road  
Ryde, NSW 2112

This research project has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics  
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)  
Australian Catholic University  
North Sydney Campus  
PO Box 968  
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059  
Ph.: 02 9739 2519  
Fax: 02 9739 2870  
Email: res.ethics@acu.edu.au


Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If you are willing to participate in this research about Teachers' experience of AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, could I ask that you read the accompanying Research Assistant Commitment to Confidentiality Agreement. This form indicates your commitment to confidentiality and your understanding that findings from this work will be published in the name of the student researcher, Adam Taylor. Please sign one copy of the Confidentiality Agreement and return this signed copy to me, and keep one copy for your records.

Yours sincerely,



Adam Taylor



Dr Roger Vallance



**Research Assistant Commitment to Confidentiality Agreement**  
(Researcher's copy)

TITLE OF PROJECT: Teachers' Experience of AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr Roger Vallance

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Adam Taylor

I, ....., (Research Assistant's name) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Principal. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the following commitments:

- to conduct interviews concerning research participants' perceptions about AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
- to maintain strict confidentiality in all matters concerning this research project
- to the publication of findings of this research in the name of the student researcher, Adam Taylor.

I realise that I may cease involvement in this project at any time, wholly at my discretion and without explanation.

I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me or any school or member of a school community in any personal way.

Name of Research Assistant: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Signature of principal investigator:

Date: .....

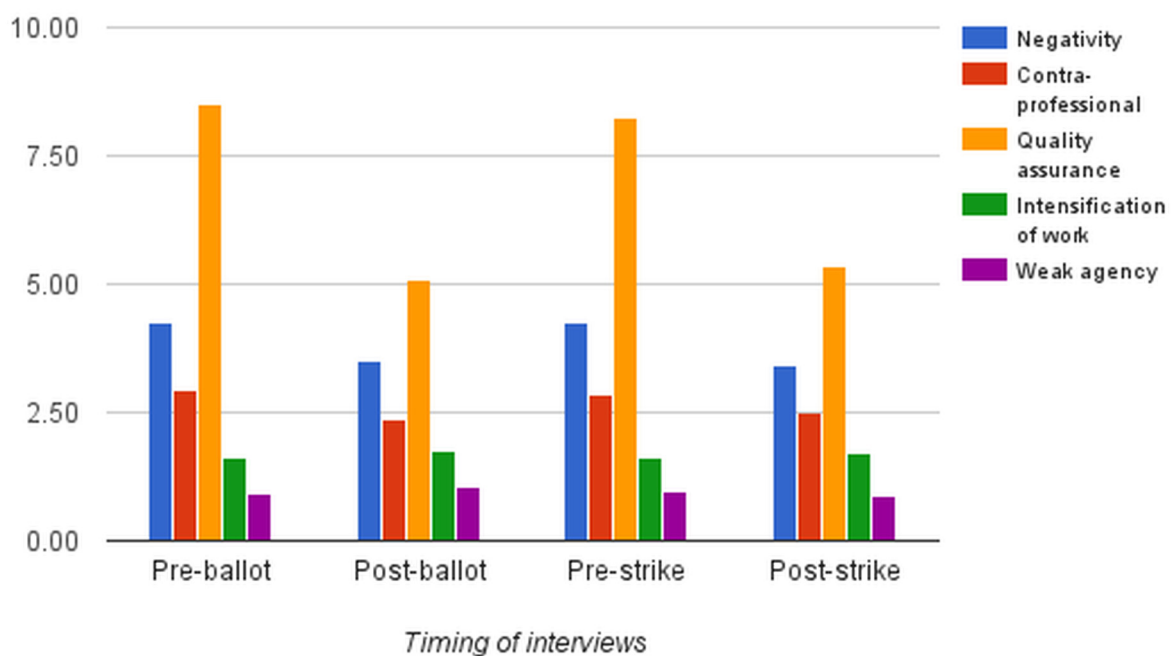
Signature of principal investigator:

Date: .....

## APPENDIX Q

**Enterprise Agreement Negotiations Effects**

Appendix Figure Q.1 illustrates the intensity of NVivo node referencing on selected nodes, by timing of events related to Enterprise Agreement negotiations. The Enterprise Agreement debate was active for the entire period of the data collection for this research. The Enterprise Agreement being proposed by the employing authority was a work conditions document that included an intention to tie teachers' salaries to the AITSL Standards.



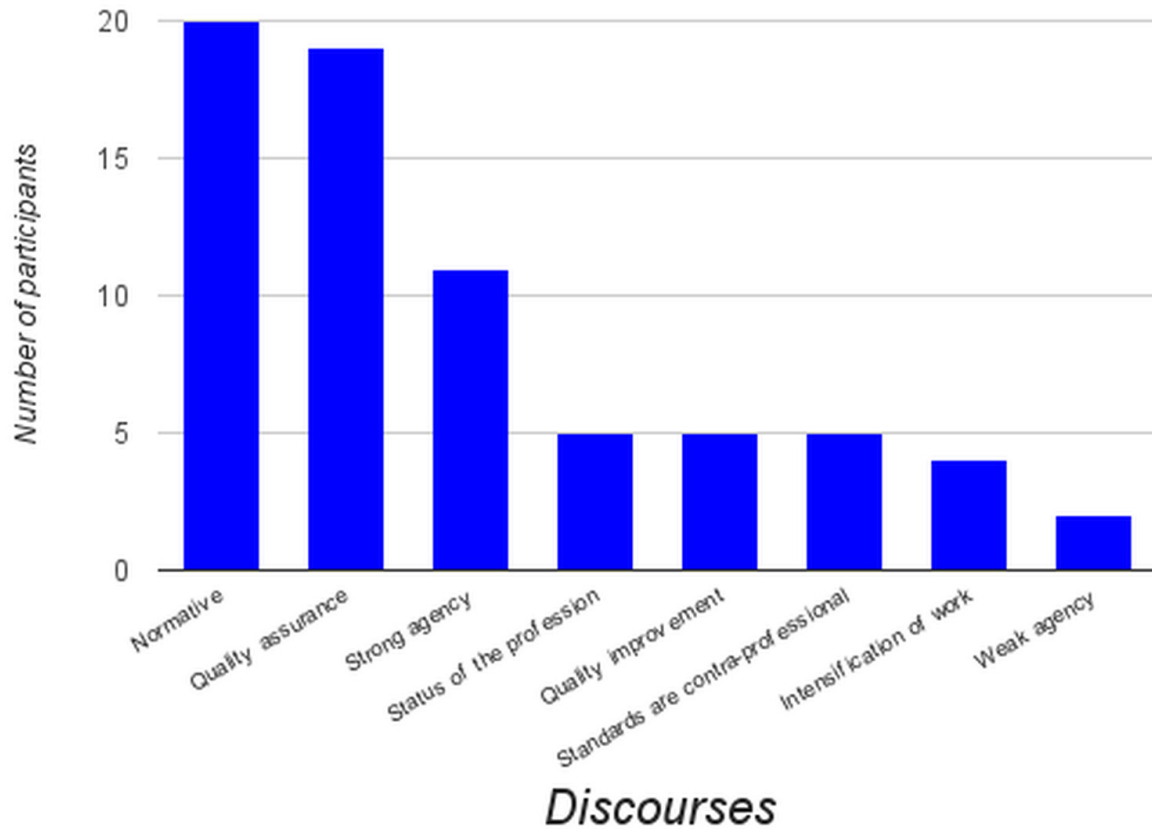
*Appendix Figure Q.1 Intensity of effects from Enterprise Agreement ballot and strike actions.*

The index of intensity in this graph was arrived at by the formula  $(R/(N/T)) \times 100$ , where R=the number of references coded at the respective NVivo (QSR International, 2013) nodes listed in the right-hand column; N=the total number of research participants in each particular timing-of-interviews category; T=the total number of all participants. This method produced a weighted index of intensity of the various nodes being interrogated for each of the timing-of-interviews subgroups. The leftmost two sets of results display the intensity of referencing of

NVivo nodes for interviews that were conducted before and after the teacher trade union ballot. The ballot took place to determine whether or not strike action should be taken in relation to the proposed Enterprise Agreement. The rightmost two columns display the corresponding intensity of referencing of NVivo nodes for interviews conducted before and after the actual industrial strike, which did in fact take place as a result of the ballot. Intensive lobbying on both the union and employer side was associated with negotiations around the Enterprise Agreement throughout the entire data collection period, with the strike action a particular point of intensity.

The results indicate that there was little distinction in the data between the ballot and the strike itself as flash points influencing teachers' views on professional standards. Negativity towards professional standards was less pronounced after the strike action, as was participants' preoccupation with issues relating to quality assurance when discussing professional standards. The reduced intensity of references to accountability post-ballot/strike lend support to an argument for creeping normalisation, discussed in Section 5.8, (p. 152). The reduced level of negativity and focus on quality assurance only serve to highlight the importance of these two key issues, which were, nonetheless, dominant themes to emerge in the findings discussed in Chapter 5.

## APPENDIX R

**Dominant Discourses in the Data, Holistically Applied**

*Appendix Figure R.1 Dominant discourses in the data, holistically applied.*

Appendix Figure R.1 illustrates the distribution of transcripts among the emergent categories of description when an attempt was made to code each interview transcript as a single entity. The secondary review consisted of re-considering each of the transcripts, listening holistically for the dominant discourse evident in each. The exercise was undertaken following the suggestion in some of the phenomenographic literature (cf Åkerlind, 2005; Collier-Reed & Ingeman, 2013), but did not reveal any particularly useful additional insights.



## APPENDIX S

## Teacher Dispositions—Exemplars from the Research Data

## 1. Relationality

*I really like being in the classroom. I enjoy the interaction with the students and I like to have a classroom that's based on relationship. I talk to the kids a lot. We can't do a lot with your education unless we connect here today and we all trust each other in the classroom and we are free to speak because exploring our ideas is really important. If there is an issue with any of the students I have to work hard to make that OK for our interactions; I believe it doesn't flow very well if you can't connect with your kids (Elizabeth, St Baldwin's).*

*I get a real sense of relationship, a real sense of the importance of how relational schools are and how relationship is so important in terms of how schools achieve and are successful. Also from that relationship angle, I get a sense of effective relationships as opposed to ineffective relationships and probably I am able to identify people who do it really well and people who don't. When I'm not at my best I certainly think, on reflection, of [those] times: What would that person have done or what I could do better (Saxon, St Charity's).*

*[The AITSL Standards] don't capture the essence of our job which is the relationship. The kids aren't going to remember what they learn; they'll remember what they feel first and then they'll remember what they learn. So if they know that you care, then the rest becomes easy. But if you are just driving to achieve all of these [Professional Standards] it is all about me, me, me, me—like, what I have done (Ruby, St Day's).*

*I just don't think that documents can be in charge of quality relationships between staff and students. Documents can set out points, but unless you're on the ground working with these kids it doesn't show the full picture (Billi, St Day's).*

*At the end of the day it's about relationship. Everything you're taught at training college is, I reckon, if you want to be a good teacher, you're told, it's not about relationship. But teaching is all about relationship. If you haven't got a relationship with the kids, you're wasting your time teaching. You can have all the knowledge in the world, you can be the best mathematician in the world, but if you can't relate to the kids and the kids can't relate to you, nothing is going to happen. You might get one or two kids that really nail it, and they can do it, and they're off, but you've lost everybody else. Kids have got to trust (Garfield, St Edbert's).*

## 2. Passion

*The standards are not what's pushing [teachers] along. It's that they love what they are doing and they love the kids and they're trying to give them the best. I*

*don't think that the standards are necessarily a motivating force (Chiara, St Abigail's).*

*I think that it's really important that kids see that you're passionate in what you do. I think that this is not a job that you can possibly be in if you're not passionate about doing it. I love my job. Sometimes I think, 'oh, I don't want to go to it, because I've got so much to do at home,' but once I'm here and I start doing my job, I actually love it. I love what I'm doing; I never wanted to become a teacher—I wanted to get into training and development—but once I started teaching, I realised that I had a real passion for it, and this is what I'd like to do (Maria, St Baldwin's).*

*I'm passionate about education, absolutely passionate about it, and feel I can make a difference (Kristen, St Charity's).*

### **3. Vocation and commitment**

*I try hard every day. I want these kids to come out not only with an education but to be good people. That's how I view myself in my role. I think that you have to be confident in yourself... You just have to be committed in yourself and confident that you know you're doing your best and you're doing a good job (Susan, St Baldwin's).*

*I think somewhere along the lines of trying to make this a profession we've lost the vocation aspect and the community aspect of this job with things like child protection and confidentiality. It takes a community to raise a kid. Some of the kids I have had the best impact on I believe I never taught (Ruby, St Day's).*

*[Teaching] has changed me enormously. I was in [another career named] for eight or nine years prior to teaching. It is a huge change for me. Teaching changed me I suppose spiritually—I don't mean that necessarily in a religious sense of the word; from a caring and compassionate point of view. The sort of human being I was in [career named]—there is a bit of difference—it was a different world there (Michael, St Baldwin's).*

### **4. Empathy**

*One of the things that has being consolidated with me through teaching, is that you never really know what is going on in the life of the person and as a teacher sometimes we get to see a glimpse of a person that you don't ordinarily see. This was particularly brought home to me when I was Year coordinating for a couple of years. As a teacher you see these kids that come into your classroom and you have opinions about them—you know, this kid is ruffraff, that kid is disinterested, that kid is really smart—and you label. But then in getting to know these kids, you realise that there is a story behind that smile or behind that frown. I guess I have become more empathetic. Everybody has a story and I think as human beings we don't take time to find out people's stories (Paris, St Fabian's).*

### **5. Altruism and moral purpose**

*I think a great teacher is someone who can get that child from a Band 3 to a Band 4 or something like that, or even making the child feel worthwhile or wanting to know what they want to do in their life and wanting to become involved in the community. Some students leave school and they're just disillusioned with the whole process—they have been labelled dumb and that's what they are—but some teachers actually give these really lower stream kids really something to strive for and give them an aim in life; that doesn't register on any data (Charles, St Abigail's).*

*I remember being at a party once. My husband went to school with some guys who were lawyers and they said 'Oh and I'm a Barrister' and 'I work for this company' and 'I'm a lawyer' And then they said 'And what do you do?' I'm a teacher and I thought 'Oh God, they'll probably think "stupid woman".' My husband said to me on the way home: 'Never be ashamed of your occupation. What we do is bring up children who are the future.' I believe that that's what I'm doing; that I'm helping children to achieve their potential and—I'm going to get all teary now, all emotional—but I do think that it's a really important job in society (Susan, St Baldwin's).*

*I don't think I would be the same person if I was an architect or an engineer, I think you become far more human. You have to become very flexible, there is a great deal of responsibility. When you start off it's a great job, you meet lots of people the same age; but I think as you develop into it you realise that the impact you have on people's lives is huge, can be huge. There is a huge amount of responsibility that goes with that (Renata, St Charity's).*

## **6. Patience**

*I don't think everybody can be a teacher. I think you have to have a certain temperament and a certain attitude and a certain level of patience. I think if you're effective in what you do and I think if you're willing to stay back during your lunch time and help a student who's struggling and if you're willing to come in over your school holidays and hold extra classes for your seniors—if you are actually that committed to your job then these [professional standards elements] tend to come naturally (Bernice, St Abigail's).*

## **7. Love of children**

*I really love the content and I love interacting with the students. I don't know which one comes first, but I think that it leads towards my becoming more positive and engaged. When things are reasonably positive, that success breeds success so I think it makes me a better person and I hope the kids are better as a result. So it's kind of a two way thing. I learn a lot from them and I hope they learn a lot from me. It certainly makes you feel younger to be involved every day with young people (Bernard, St Day's).*

*You see the good in the kids. You see Jesus in all those around you. You see the ratbag that you were in the ones that are mucking up, but you know that they can*

*turn it around if you give them the right guidance. Can you hang in there for the 18 months or two years to see them come right? This is a fantastic occupation. I love it to bits. I couldn't think of doing any other job. I'm 35 years in the job, and I'm learning something every single day. I learn something from the kids every time I go into a classroom. No two days are the same. The colleagues around you—the young ones give you the energy, the old ones give you the wisdom. It's a partnership. I just think it's a great job. I'm certainly a better person for it. I care for others because of the job. I cared about myself before (Garfield, St Edbert's).*

#### **8. Adaptability and fine-grained professional judgement**

*I think you need to be able to adapt. You need to be able to cater for a variety of moments. Every day I will have a lesson planned and set and ready to go. It doesn't necessarily mean that lesson is going to work; if you're working with an ESL class and some of your students have had a rough day they're not going to adapt. They're not going to work with what you've created. It's a matter of taking the lesson for what it is and making it work depending on the demeanour of the kids there. I think adaptation more than anything and variety in your lessons—making them engaging and interesting—is probably the most important; but also keeping the kids grounded and making them realise that it can't be all fun all the time (Bernice, St Abigail's).*

#### **9. Openness to others**

*[Teaching] opened me up made me much more open to learning things. It's made me more vulnerable but stronger in lots of ways. It's the development of the relationship. It has taught me about trusting, engaging, being open with people (Elizabeth, St Baldwin's).*

#### **10. Authenticity**

*Teaching encapsulates everything in your life. You become mentor, you become teacher, but you put on so many other hats. All of a sudden you need to console a student that is upset because something's happened to them in their personal life and they're telling you these things in tears. Maybe the next minute you need to go and sort out another problem... I realised quickly that if you're not genuine about it the students will pick up on it... they will pick up if you're not genuine about anything you do (Roger, St Abigail's).*

**11. Personality**

*I think having a personality in the classroom and being approachable is great. I see teachers who are really strict—where I can't do that. That's not me. I could do it for a while, but then I've got to smile, I've got to tell them a story. I need interaction, I want to know about them. It's not taking away from the content or the subject matter, so my personality comes out into the classroom. I can't go in there and just be a teacher. I'm there as a teacher and as a person, so that's me (Catriona, St Fabian's).*

**12. Collegiality**

*I think it helps the students to see the teachers getting along. It models collegiality and just that we enjoy one another. I think that it gives a sense of confidence to the students. I think it works and I think in this school it's the building of community (Chiara, St Abigail's).*

*Education: it's about the education of the whole person: the spiritual, the physical and also the family and personal situations. We have discussions with each other—especially with the Year Coordinators—it's an open environment. The doors are open for everybody to discuss their problems or issues about students and we do. I think having a communal staffroom helps because we are sitting near other departments and we can hear what each other are saying and the Year Coordinators are very open and helpful. If I have a problem with a student, I need to know if there's any reason why I should be more lenient or give a student more time to do a task. There's also Learning Support, I can talk to those people there also, so it is a daily occurrence that we do these things but we don't actually refer to the actual paperwork of [the AITSL Standards] (Una, St Charity's).*

**13. Love of learning**

*I guess my main thing is I have a love of learning and I want to imbue that in students—that idea of learning as a lifelong adventure (Mary, St Baldwin's).*

## APPENDIX T

## Freedom of Information Application—NSW Institute of Teachers

## NSW INSTITUTE OF TEACHERS

**Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009****ACCESS APPLICATION**

Please complete this form to apply for formal access to government information under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act)*. If you need help in filling out this form, please contact the Institute on 1300 739 338

**Your details**

Surname:

TAYLOR

Title: Mr / Ms

Other names:

ADAM JOHN

Postal address:

35 MARGARET ST  
STANMORE

Postcode: 2048

Day-time telephone:

0409 324 337

Fax

Email:

adam.taylor@hccryde.catholic.edu.au

The questions below are optional and the information will only be used for the purposes of providing better service.

Place of birth:

MELB.

Main language spoken:

ENGLISH

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander: Yes / No (circle one)

Do you have special needs for assistance with this application?:

No



I agree to receive correspondence at the above email address.

**Proof of identity**

Only required when an applicant is requesting information on their own behalf.

When seeking access to personal information, an applicant must provide proof of identity in the form of a *certified copy* of any one of the following documents:

- ☐ Australian driver's licence with photograph, ☐ Current Australian passport signature and current address
- ☐ Other proof of signature and current address details

**Information requested**

Please describe the information you would like to access in enough detail to allow us to identify it. Note: If you do not give enough details about the information, we may refuse to process your application.

The number of teachers who have applied for Voluntary Accreditation at Professional Competence since 1 Oct 2004.\*

The number of teachers who have been granted Voluntary Accreditation at Professional Competence since 1 Oct 2004.\*

SIMILARLY The number of teachers who have (1) applied for and (2) been granted Voluntary Accreditation at Professional Accomplishment since 1 Oct 2004.\*

The number of teachers who have (1) applied for and (2) been granted Voluntary Accreditation at Professional Leadership since 1 Oct 2004.\*

Are you seeking personal information? Yes / No (circle one)

**Form of access**

How do you wish to access the information?

\* By sector (Govt, Catholic Systemic, independent)

☐ Inspect the document(s)

☐ A copy of the document(s)

☐ Access in another way (please specify)

I am willing to be guided by Institute officers and would welcome the opportunity to meet and speak with you.

**Application Fee**

I attach payment of the \$30 application fee by cash / cheque / money order (circle one).

(Note: please do NOT send cash by post)

Please see Credit Card details on next page

**Disclosure log**

If the information sought is released to you and would be of interest to other members of the public, details about your application may be recorded in the Institute's 'disclosure log'. This is published on the Institute's website.

Do you object to this? Yes / No (circle one)

**Discount in processing charges**

You may be asked to pay a charge for processing the application (\$30/hour). Some applicants may be entitled to a 50% reduction in their processing charges. If you wish to apply for a discount, please indicate the reason:


☐ Financial hardship – please attach supporting documentation (eg a pension or

Centrelink card).

AND / OR

☒ Special benefit to the public – please specify why below:

Work towards a Doctoral Thesis  
on Teachers' Experience of Professional  
Standards -

Applicant's signature: 

Date: 1.7.2012

Please post this form to:

NSW Institute of Teachers  
PO Box A976  
SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235

or lodge it at:

Level 10  
175 Castlereagh St  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

or fax to:

02 8362 9098

or scan and email to:

[contactus@nswteachers.nsw.edu.au](mailto:contactus@nswteachers.nsw.edu.au)

MASTERCARD

NAME ON CARD :

CARD NUMBER :

NUMBER ON REVERSE :

EXPIRY



END OF MANUSCRIPT