

Globalization and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

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Abstract

Globalization has been perceived as a major source of influence in education in general and the work of teachers in particular (Stier, 2004). This paper sets out to discuss the impacts of globalization on teacher standards and teachers' practices in the context of Australia by raising two key arguments. First, globalization has led the Australian teacher standards to be developed in a way that emphasizes the need for global competitiveness, and consequently influenced teachers' work through the use of economic models including accountability and evidence-based practices. Second, globalization has highlighted the importance of digital literacy in teacher standards, and as a result promoted teachers' real-life practices of digital technologies integration in the classroom. The paper concludes with several implications in terms of research and practice.

Keywords: Australian professional standards for teachers, globalization, teacher standards

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Globalization has been exerting a significant influence on the development of teacher standards worldwide (Stier, 2004). Globalization is defined as the "the widening, deepening and speeding up of connections across national borders" (Huwart & Verdier, 2013, p. 10). It is characterized by the compression of time and space, which, as a result of the rapid advances in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), has led to increased interconnectedness among different parts of the world (Bottery, 2006). Maringe et al. (2013) drew attention to globalization as mostly concerning trade and economics and their effects on one country's ability to compete internationally.

Amidst the globalization processes, education systems across the world have felt the impacts of standards-based reforms (SBRs) as a policy solution to tackle the issues of student attainment. As a 'global form' (Collier & Ong, 2005) which share family likeness but vary when translated into different contexts (Lewis et al., 2020), SBRs strive to establish a governing logic, deciding what is known and knowable about a particular social sphere (Dunn, 2005). In relation to teaching specifically, SBRs are often grounded in policies that spell out exactly what teachers should know and be able to do.

Under the influence of global SBRs, the attempt of Australian education system to produce a set of common teaching standards reached its milestone with the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians in December 2008 (MCEETYA, 2008), in which Australian governments affirmed their commitment to developing a 'high quality teaching and school leadership workforce in Australian schools' (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 11). This was followed by the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality which supported the association between student outcome and teacher quality (COAG, 2008).

Building on previous policy developments, the current professional standards came after the establishment of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in 2010. AITSL introduced the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (or the Standards) to set expectations for teachers in terms of knowledge (what they should know) and skills (what they should be able to do) at four progressive career stages namely Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead (AITSL, 2011). There are seven overlapping standards, which are categorized into three teaching domains including Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, and Professional Engagement (Figure 1).

Professional knowledge	Professional Practice	Professional Engagement
<p>Standard 1: Know students and how they learn</p> <p>Standard 2: Know the content and how to teach it</p>	<p>Standard 3: Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning</p> <p>Standard 4: Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments</p> <p>Standard 5: Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning</p>	<p>Standard 6: Engage in professional learning</p> <p>Standard 7: Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community</p>

Figure 1: An overview of the Standards (AITSL, 2011)

1.2. Aims and focus

This paper aims to explore the impacts of globalization on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and educators' teaching practices in schools. Two key arguments were raised, which were substantiated by theoretical literature (regarding education policy) and empirical literature (regarding educators' work in schools).

2. Impacts of globalization on the Australian professional standards for teachers

2.1. Argument 1

Summary: Globalization has amplified the need to compete, and Australian teacher professional standards are accordingly developed to contribute to the global competitiveness of the nation. The desire to ensure a high performing education system has consequently influenced the development and enactment of the Standards through accountability and evidence-based practices.

2.1.1. Policy

The influences of global movements on the formation of the Standards are shown in two key aspects that are their purpose and features.

Purpose of the Standards

Growing attention to competitiveness as an indicator of prosperity has led education policies to be increasingly economy-driven (Karen et al., 2016). Neoliberalism, characterized by market policies (Furlong et al., 2000), has transformed education into a consumer-driven system, where education is viewed as a commodity and a way to increase national efficiency (Connell, 2009). From a neoliberalist viewpoint, teachers are posited as human capital, and with greater investment in education can render their countries globally competitive (Peters, 2000).

The inclination towards embedding economic interests into education was advocated by one of the key actors in the global policy network - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). OECD has long been known for its domination in global education governance (Lewis et al., 2016; Sellar & Lingard 2014), where its advocated ideas and policies are often adopted and adapted into different national contexts. Specifically, in one of OECD's reports titled "*Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers - Final Report*" ('Teachers Matter') focusing on teacher quality in 2005, it was emphasized that teaching, particularly 'teacher quality', has the most profound impact on student attainment (OECD, 2005). Under a neoliberalist lense, this essentially means that teachers are perceived as a policy problem, and that teaching standards, developed by governments, are justified as a critical intervention.

OECD's take on the causal relationship between teacher quality and student outcome was taken up and assembled into Australian teacher standards (Glenn & Lewis, 2018). The premise of the Standards, that is teachers are positioned as 'the greatest resource', and that improving teacher quality is 'part of Australia's efforts to improve student attainment and ensure it has a world class system of education' (AITSL, 2011), makes it clear that one of the main purposes of the Standards is to improve teacher quality, through which Australian education can compete globally. While this is welcoming in the sense that the importance of teachers' work in schools is acknowledged, the deficit view of teachers as the strongest determinant of student success may lead to a

misguided belief that individual teachers are solely held accountable (Reid et al., 2014), regardless of various socio-cultural factors that may also play a part. In reality, there is a dearth of empirical evidence of the causal link between teacher standards and student performance (Loughland & Ellis, 2016).

Characteristics of the Standards

The global policy narrative, that is teachers have the greatest impact on student outcomes, has reshaped the development of the Standards through an increased emphasis on accountability and evidence-based practices (Goodwin, 2021).

The Standards explicitly spell out what teachers should know and be able to do at each career stage. The explicitness of the Standards is a strong indicator of accountability, through which it is observable whether teachers are able to demonstrate certain levels of professional knowledge, practice and engagement as expected at their career level. This use of the Standards as a professional accountability model might cause them to be interpreted as a list of boxes that need to be ticked rather than a model for professional learning (Timperley, 2011).

For the purpose of establishing accountability, instances of evidence-based practices (e.g., using data collected from formative and summative assessments) are evident in the Standards. The Standards, particularly Standard 5 (Figure 2), stipulate that teachers have the ability to conduct assessments, offer feedback, interpret data and report on student achievement.

Descriptor at career stage			
Graduate	Proficient	Highly Accomplished	Lead
Focus area 5.1 Assess student learning			
Demonstrate understanding of assessment strategies, including informal and formal, diagnostic, formative and summative approaches to assess student learning.	Develop, select and use informal and formal, diagnostic, formative and summative assessment strategies to assess student learning.	Develop and apply a comprehensive range of assessment strategies to diagnose learning needs, comply with curriculum requirements and support colleagues to evaluate the effectiveness of their approaches to assessment.	Evaluate school assessment policies and strategies to support colleagues with: using assessment data to diagnose learning needs, complying with curriculum, system and/or school assessment requirements and using a range of assessment strategies.
Focus area 5.2 Provide feedback to students on their learning			
Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of providing timely and appropriate feedback to students about their learning.	Provide timely, effective and appropriate feedback to students about their achievement relative to their learning goals.	Select from an effective range of strategies to provide targeted feedback based on informed and timely judgements of each student's current needs in order to progress learning.	Model exemplary practice and initiate programs to support colleagues in applying a range of timely, effective and appropriate feedback strategies.
Focus area 5.3 Make consistent and comparable judgements			
Demonstrate understanding of assessment moderation and its application to support consistent and comparable judgements of student learning.	Understand and participate in assessment moderation activities to support consistent and comparable judgements of student learning.	Organise assessment moderation activities that support consistent and comparable judgements of student learning.	Lead and evaluate moderation activities that ensure consistent and comparable judgements of student learning to meet curriculum and school or system requirements.
Descriptor at career stage			
Graduate	Proficient	Highly Accomplished	Lead
Focus area 5.4 Interpret student data			
Demonstrate the capacity to interpret student assessment data to evaluate student learning and modify teaching practice.	Use student assessment data to analyse and evaluate student understanding of subject/content, identifying interventions and modifying teaching practice.	Work with colleagues to use data from internal and external student assessments for evaluating learning and teaching, identifying interventions and modifying teaching practice.	Coordinate student performance and program evaluation using internal and external student assessment data to improve teaching practice.
Focus area 5.5 Report on student achievement			
Demonstrate understanding of a range of strategies for reporting to students and parents/carers and the purpose of keeping accurate and reliable records of student achievement.	Report clearly, accurately and respectfully to students and parents/carers about student achievement, making use of accurate and reliable records.	Work with colleagues to construct accurate, informative and timely reports to students and parents/carers about student learning and achievement.	Evaluate and revise reporting and accountability mechanisms in the school to meet the needs of students, parents/carers and colleagues.

Figure 2: Standard 5 - Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning (AITSL, 2011)

2.1.2. Schools

Global movements of teacher standards based on economic models have noticeable influences on the work of educators in schools. The main finding drawn from the literature is that the Standards are mostly used as a mechanism for public accountability and quality management (Clinton et al., 2013), which has in turn fuelled a culture of performativity.

Pressure posed by performativity has prompted schools to implement a more bureaucratic model, wherein compliance is prioritized over development (Bourke et al., 2015; Sachs, 2016). Within that managerialist paradigm, teacher autonomy hence is likely to suffer at the expense of the one-size-fits-all approach to teaching (Bourke et al., 2015; Sachs, 2016). Specifically, the use of prescriptive teacher standards may hinder teachers from experimenting and using innovative pedagogies, and that the enacted curriculum may get more restricted

due to teachers feeling more pressure to prepare their students for international high-stakes tests, most notably PISA (Sachs, 2016). Additionally, the rigid top-down corporate approach to teacher standards has given rise to the devaluation of creativity in schools. Despite being listed as one important skill for the 21st century (ACARA, 2013), creativity was reported to be seriously overlooked in a performativity culture that too often favors measurable outcomes than authentic teacher professional development (Luke et. al., 2013).

In terms of evidence-based practices, it is interesting to note one emerging key player whose work is likely to exert a noticeable influence on teachers' practices, and that is the Australian Education Research Organization (AERO). Funded by the federal government, AERO's vision is to improve student outcomes through the use of evidence (AERO, 2021). A recent survey conducted by AERO found that while a significant number of Australian teachers implemented evidence-based strategies to support classroom management, formative assessment and explicit instruction, other strategies that have less to do with evidence (e.g., tailoring lessons to students' specific learning styles, using unguided instruction) were noted as 'troubling' (AERO, 2021). AERO's promoted ideas regarding what are considered 'sound' teaching strategies may carry important implications for Australian teachers' work in the years to come, particularly with respect to practitioner-generated evidence. In addition to experiencing a lack of control and creativity due to increased accountability and evidence-based practices, Australian teachers may feel overwhelmed by performativity requirements. It was reported that Australian teachers spend 1300 hours in class each year (OECD, 2014), not to mention the time spent on extra administrative requirements such as marking, reporting and programming. Lack of time was echoed by Morris and Paterson (2013) who pointed out that primary school teachers did not have enough time to get used to using the Standards. Time constraints have consequently deterred teachers from catering for students' specific needs and engaging authentically with their students (Appel, 2020). Feeling limited in their ability to use the Standards in a meaningful way, many would resort to 'getting by', even commit acts of dishonesty, just to meet expectations set by their school leaders (Tuinamua, 2011).

2.2. *Argument 2*

Summary: Globalization has laid a greater emphasis on teachers' ability to integrate technology in the classroom, which manifests in the Standards and their classroom practices.

2.2.1. Policy

The relationship between technology and globalization has been widely established in the literature, with technology being credited as an important 'material force' in allowing globalization processes to occur through the compression of time and space (Bottery, 2006). It is increasingly recognized that students should be able to use technology competently in order to be competitive in a world of digitalization (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012; De Bortoli et al., 2013).

The growing need for students to be technologically literate in an age of globalization was translated into the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum: Technologies (F-10), approved by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (2015) comprised two interconnected areas that are Design and Technologies and Digital Technologies. This requires teachers to be able to harness the potentials of technology by developing necessary technological knowledge and skills, and position themselves as effective and critical users of digital resources (Education Council, 2019).

Technological competence is also emphasized in the list of general capabilities put forward in the Australian curriculum (ACARA, 2011). One of the seven general capabilities proposed is Information and Communication (ICT) Capability, recently renamed as Digital Literacy (ACARA, 2022) (Figure 3). Digital Literacy refers to what students should know and be able to do in terms of critically selecting and using technologies, adapting to emerging technologies, and protecting oneself and others in a world that is increasingly digitalized (ACARA, 2022). While this is essentially designated for students, it has clear implications for teachers' practices given that they are expected to teach and assess students' capabilities (ACARA, 2011).

Element	Sub-elements
Practising digital safety and wellbeing	Manage digital wellbeing
	Manage online privacy and safety
	Manage digital identity
Communicating and collaborating	Communicate
	Collaborate and exchange
Investigating	Locate information
	Collect and collate data
	Interpret data
	Evaluate information
Creating	Plan and design
	Create content
	Respect intellectual property
	Manage content
Managing and operating	Protect content
	Select and operate tools

Figure 3: Digital Literacy (elements and sub-elements) (ACARA, 2022)

The greater emphasis on technology in the Australian curriculum has led to the use of teacher standards as an avenue to ensure teachers' technology adoption in the classroom. Specifically, in the Standards, while it is implied that many Standards can be successfully performed using technology, three focus areas are explicitly related to ICT (Figure 4). There is a clear alignment between Digital Literacy general capability and the Standards. For instance, while students are expected to 'practice digital safety and well-being', teachers should also 'use ICT safely, responsibly and ethically'.

Career Stage	Focus Area 2.6: Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	Focus Area 3.4: Select and use resources	Focus Area 4.5: Use ICT safely, responsibly and ethically
Graduate	Implement teaching strategies for using ICT to expand curriculum learning opportunities for students.	Demonstrate knowledge of a range of resources, including ICT, that engage students in their learning.	Demonstrate an understanding of the relevant issues and the strategies available to support the safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT in learning and teaching.
Proficient	Use effective teaching strategies to integrate ICT into learning and teaching programmes to make selected content relevant and meaningful.	Select and/or create and use a range of resources, including ICT, to engage students in their learning.	Incorporate strategies to promote the safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT in learning and teaching.
Highly Accomplished	Model high-level teaching knowledge and skills and work with colleagues to use current ICT to improve their teaching practice and make content relevant and meaningful.	Assist colleagues to create, select and use a wide range of resources, including ICT, to engage students in their learning.	Model, and support colleagues to develop, strategies to promote the safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT in learning and teaching.
Lead	Lead and support colleagues within the school to select and use ICT with effective teaching strategies to expand learning opportunities and content knowledge for all students.	Model exemplary skills and lead colleagues in selecting, creating and evaluating resources, including ICT, for application by teachers within or beyond the school	Review or implement new policies and strategies to ensure the safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT in learning and teaching.

Figure 4: Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and ICT (AITSL, 2011)

2.2.2. Schools

In response to the advocacy of ICT in global education and teacher professional standards, Australian teachers are reported to hold a generally positive view of technology integration. In the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual Statistical Report 2017, more than 90% of secondary school English teachers confirmed feeling positively about using technology-mediated instruction, and a relatively similar figure pointed to technology integration being prioritized in their school administration (Vassallo & Warren, 2018). In a study by the Gonski Institute for Education on 1876 Australian educators, over 40% of Australian teachers and school leaders believed that technology uptake would improve the quality of teaching and learning (Gonski Institute for Education, 2020).

Global ICT trends have also resulted in increased real-life practices of technology adoption. The 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey found that Australian schools ranked third in using ICT among OECD participants (OECD, 2018). Nearly 79% of Australian lower secondary teachers were reported to let their students use technology to do projects or class assignments, while the OECD average is 53% (OECD, 2018). Teachers were found to use technology to address various pedagogical needs such as using Google Slides for collaboration, using multimedia technology to support students with learning problems, and engaging students in ethical and meaningful content creation in an online environment (Gonski Institute for Education, 2020).

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that technologies of globalization are breeding new forms of ‘datafication’ (Jarke & Breiter, 2019). With the potential to create a mass data repository, technology has allowed educators to think and see in new ways, thus influencing their teaching practices. In reality, technology is increasingly used for assessment and reporting purposes, with more than half of the teachers adopting digital tools to report student achievement (Gonski Institute for Education, 2020). With schools being increasingly transformed into ‘data platforms’ (Williamson, 2015a), the rise of datafication of education might contribute to issues of inequality, privacy, and more importantly, surveillance and control that would eventually compound the extant culture of accountability (Selwyn, 2015; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

3. Conclusion and Implications

In this paper, the author took the view that globalization has significantly reshaped the development of teacher standards and the work of educators in schools in Australia by putting forward two arguments. First, global forces, and specifically economic globalization, have shifted the formation and implementation of the Standards towards economic models marked by an increase in accountability and evidence-based practices. Second, in an age of globalization, integrating technology in the classroom is increasingly vital, and the Standards have accordingly highlighted the need for teachers to be digitally proficient.

Several research-based and practical implications can be drawn from this paper. Research-wise, there should be more theoretical and empirical studies exploring the impacts of globalization on Australian teacher standards in terms of policy direction and enactment. In a rapidly changing world where social, economic and political spheres are increasingly deterritorialized, in order to fully understand education policies and the forces influencing them, it is crucial to think beyond the 'local', 'state' or 'national' and into the 'transnational' (Han, 2018).

Practice-wise, there are a number of measures to consider. Regarding the balance between autonomy and accountability, a more flexible and collaborative model should be promoted wherein teachers would exercise more autonomy and agency over their professional decision-making in the classroom (Sachs, 2016). Moreover, educators should be encouraged to make informed decisions based on their own teaching contexts. This can help to tackle the issue of a standardized approach to education (Lewis & Hogan, 2016). In response to a call for ICT integration to enable globalization processes, teachers should be provided with regular and context-based professional development opportunities to experiment with and learn about the affordances of different technological tools in order to decide how to use technology to best match their pedagogical inclinations.

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