The National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSLS)

Standards for School Leadership Project
Issues paper and Consultation Questionnaire
August – October 2005

DOCUMENT TWO
CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Teaching and Learning Research Program
Australian Council for Educational Research

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Who is this document for?

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

Why is this consultation taking place?

The purpose of this current consultation is to identify some of the main issues that might be associated with introducing a profession-wide approach to the development and implementation of school leadership standards.
This is an electronic questionnaire. You can complete the questionnaire by typing directly into it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The views of the profession elicited through this consultation will feed directly into a draft paper on options for a national approach to the development of standards and professional certification for school leaders. A further opportunity for the profession to feed into the development of options will be provided through a National Forum which will be held in Canberra in late November. The details of the Forum are yet to be determined.
SECTION 1 INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONDENT

DATE:

A. DETAILS OF ORGANISATION

Name of organisation:

Address of organisation:

City:

State:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Signature:  (required only if returning a hard copy)

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

C. Does the consultation response contain any confidential information?

D. Please note that we may contact you during the consultation process to clarify or seek further information arising from your responses. If you do not wish to be contacted please check (X) this box  □
SECTION 2 THE IDEA OF A STANDARDS-GUIDED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SYSTEM

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

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

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

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

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

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

(See page 9 of the Issues Paper)

| 1. | What value could a standards-guided professional learning system for principals have for Australian schools? |
SECTION 3  STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT

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

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

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

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

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

(See page 10 of the Issues Paper)

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<tr>
<th>1. Does your organisation share the same understanding of “standards” as described in the issues paper? If not, what is your understanding?</th>
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<th>2. What benefits might there be for principals and prospective principals of a profession-wide system of standards?</th>
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<th>3. What benefits might there be for employing authorities and other interested parties in a profession-wide system of standards for principals?</th>
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4. In developing a national system of professional standards for principals, what issues would need to be addressed?

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

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

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

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

9. How can stakeholder involvement in standards development be optimised?
SECTION 4    PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

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

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

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

(See page 15 of the Issues Paper)

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

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

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

4. How should professional associations and other organisations be involved in developing methods for gathering and assessing evidence for professional certification of principals?
5. How might the level of involvement of professional organisations and associations in the development of assessments and any certification process be optimised?

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

7. This issues paper makes a distinction between certification provided by a professional body and performance management systems in particular education employing authorities. Is there a place for profession-wide certification in addition to existing systems for performance management?
SECTION 5 CREATING AN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STANDARDS-GUIDED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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

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

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

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

2. What role might your organisation play in providing an infrastructure to support standards-guided professional learning?
SECTION 6     BUILDING SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION FOR CERTIFICATION

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

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

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

1. What benefits might a profession-wide system of standards and certification have in terms of:

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<th>Principal mobility</th>
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<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
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<td>Attracting and retaining principals in ‘high need’ locations, settings and areas</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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2. Under what conditions would your organisation be interested in providing support/recognition/incentives for a profession-wide system of certification for principals?

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

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SECTION 7  FURTHER COMMENTS

Please provide any additional comments.

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

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

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