



SAASSO is the parent association for public education in South Australia.

SAASSO is the Governing Council association for South Australia's public schools.

Teacher quality is the number one in-school influence on student outcomes.

SAASSO agrees that a Teacher Performance and Development Framework is an absolute necessity.

However, the fundamental weakness of the proposed Framework, is its reliance on the National Professional Standards for Teachers.

These Standards fail in their stated objective; to provide "a clear understanding of what effective teaching is", and are referenced in most sections of the Framework.

Basing a performance and development framework for teachers, on standards that fail to establish clear, ambitious and appropriate levels of teacher skills and knowledge, cannot result in improved teacher quality.

In 2010 SAASSO made a submission on the draft of the Standards. It is disappointing that SAASSO's feedback seems to have been ignored.

Following is an excerpt from SAASSO's submission.

Fundamentally, these draft standards are disappointing and waste a unique opportunity to have a real impact on the quality of education we deliver to our children. Instead of the explicit definitions this document promises, we are delivered a jumbled, vague and at times meaningless collection of 'buzz' words and adjectives.

The Standards also fail spectacularly in supporting its arguments with any objective research. There are volumes of national and international data on teacher quality - from OECD data, to credible submissions from the Business Council of Australia (BCA), to a variety of studies on teacher quality and development and independent surveys of Australian teachers - all of which has apparently been ignored in preparing this document.

As an inevitable consequence, perhaps the most vital aspect of teacher quality - expert knowledge of the subjects that a teacher teaches is conspicuously absent from much of the standards. The Rudd Government's own Education Revolution Manifest emphasises how crucial a teacher's own basic literacy and numeracy skills are - but in the Standards we are confronted instead with the almost cliché concepts of pedagogies as being the be all of teaching.

A last, but not final, omission in these Standards is the practical issue of how they will be applied to the tens of thousands of teachers currently in schools - a number of whom may currently occupy a senior or leadership position in a school, because of seniority, but who would not meet new standards ... will their position be reassessed, or ignored?

Sadly, as with current teacher standards, these have a linear 'feel' to them - as if simply by the passage of time, teachers will inevitably move along the continuum to the highest levels of pay.



SAASSO's 2010 Federal Election submission established 3 key facets to improving teacher quality;

1. Recruitment
2. Content knowledge
3. Performance Management.

In regards to performance management - the focus of this proposed Framework - SAASSO reported the following OECD TALIS data:

- 93% of teachers report that their school principal does not take steps to address persistently underperforming teachers
- 71% say teachers with sustained poor performance are not dismissed
- 63% of teachers feel teacher evaluation is done only because supervisors are obliged to
- only 8% believe they would receive recognition for doing their job better
- 30% of teachers have never received appraisal or feedback from their principal.

Development Opportunities

“Development opportunities will be negotiated to take into account the priorities and resources of schools a groups within the school, as well as individual needs...”

This statement is alarmingly vague. Does this mean that the bias of the principal, for example, may dictate who or what is given opportunities for development?

Development opportunities should be mandated equally for all teachers.

Evidence

Parent and student feedback is mentioned as a *possible* source of evidence of teacher improvement. Parents, as an important part of the school community, should have the opportunity to take part in teacher evaluations and to provide feedback.

Feedback from a variety of sources should be mandated as part of the teacher review process.

Transparency

What will happen to the results of teacher reviews? Will the results be kept confidential, or made available to the school community? Transparency of the review process is essential. Parents have a right to know if their child's teacher is underperforming, and what action is being taken.

Underperformance

“Underperformance will then be managed through separate processes which are negotiated industrially.”

Management of underperformance should absolutely be included in this Framework. In order to promote teacher performance and development, the results of underperforming should be consistent and clear to both teachers and the education community.