



Critical Review of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: Where are the non-Cognitive Skills?

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Teaching professional standards are considered an essential tool for teacher preparation, recruitment, development, and promotion. In Australia, this is known as the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality. The high-stakes nature of these standards shapes teacher practices and policies, influencing teacher preparation, selection and accreditation. However, these standards have strong criticisms due to their reductive function and lack of holistic representation of effective teachers. We used Bacchi's (2009) "What's the problem represented to be?" (WPR) approach to analyse the APST to contribute to understanding how teaching standards should be framed as they significantly influence selection, preparation, retention and accreditation for both pre-and in-service teachers. We outlined some policy recommendations based on the results of our analysis.

Keywords: non-cognitive skills, teaching standards, policy analysis, regulatory, developmental

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are an integral component of the educative process, contributing 30% to the observed variance in student achievement (Hattie, 2003). Due to the critical importance of teachers, teacher preparation, selection, and accreditation are at the forefront of educational policy to ensure the country's educational, social, and economic growth (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012). The critical importance of teachers builds on the discourse of teacher centrality that has come into fashion since the 19th century, positioning teachers as accountable, carrying the responsibility of influencing students to ensure their success (Larsen, 2010). To support teachers and define teaching effectiveness, policies have been developed to outline the key responsibilities of teachers. One of these policies is the professional teaching standards, underpinned by a strong philosophical belief that it will ensure that teachers meet the demands of quality and effective teaching.

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Teaching professional standards are considered an essential tool for teacher preparation, recruitment, development, and promotion. Most educational institutions across the world developed their standards with clearly articulated key elements that define what teachers should know and should do. There is no uniform format or key elements as teaching effectiveness is a context-driven construct with policies and contextual factors shaping it (Khairutdinov, 2019). However, debates around the use of teaching standards exist. Other researchers and teachers view these standards as developmental devices (Loughland, 2016), which could enhance teachers' professional knowledge and practice (Sachs, 2005). Another group of researchers and teachers strongly believes that teaching standards are regulatory by nature (Mockler 2013). In addition, teaching standards are highly criticised for their reductive function. This is due to their limited nature, which they do not outline the holistic characteristics of effective teachers. Standards are often written emphasising the “epistemological dimensions of teachers’ work (what a teacher must know and be able to do), but they have little to say in the ontological domain, that is, teachers are human beings in the process of becoming” (Taylor, 2006, p.20). Whilst the epistemological dimensions ensure that teachers have the required content and pedagogical knowledge and skills to teach effectively, the ontological domain, which is underpinned by the personal attributes of teachers, known as non-cognitive skills (AITSL, 2015), or non-cognitive skills (Klassen et al., 2014), will enhance teachers' positive beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour towards their profession. The absence of these non-cognitive skills suggests that teachers are like machines that function like technicians, performing pre-conceived routines. The representation of teachers in the APST is critically important as this policy shapes the professionalisation of teaching. A large number of studies have highlighted the roles of teachers’ non-cognitive skills in ensuring teaching effectiveness (e.g., Collie et al., 2020; Gu, 2014); Korthagen & Evelein, 2016; Loughland, 2019; Martin & Collie, 2019; Pedota, 2015). The demonstration of teachers' knowledge and skills largely depends on their non-cognitive skills, which can hinder or inhibit their effectiveness. Thus, clear articulation of these non-cognitive skills in teaching standards will provide a holistic picture of and a deeper understanding of the attributes of effective teaching.

In most educational institutions, their initial teacher education curricula are aligned to the attainment of the graduate level standards, and in-service teacher professional development (PD) programs are focused on raising teachers’ knowledge and skills specified in the standards. PD programs “shaped in the interests of such standards is necessarily defined as narrow and quantifiable in its scope, usually focusing on the acquisition of knowledge and skills that will support teachers to demonstrate their competence in the standards (Mockler, 2013, p. 38).” This controlling effect of teaching standards can either be beneficial or determinantal to ensuring teaching effectiveness. If the teaching standards holistically describe effective teaching with core elements clearly articulated, then it will position teaching more strategically. However, if the standards represent only certain elements, teaching performance will be skewed towards those articulated in the policy. The high-stake nature of teaching exacerbates the strong emphasis on demonstrating those elements and how teaching standards are used for teachers' accountability. Sachs and Mockler (2012) argue that the strong focus on the

use of teaching standards for teachers' accountability has a negative impact on teacher autonomy and professional identity.

Given the issues above, this paper critically reviews the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers using Bacchi's (2009) "*What's the problem represented to be?*" (WPR) approach to highlight its silences, particularly in the way effective teaching is defined to outline some policy recommendations. Our analysis contributes to understanding how teaching standards should be framed as they significantly influence selection, preparation, retention and accreditation for pre-service and in-service teachers.

The Policy: The Australian Professional Teaching Standards

In Australia, the teaching standards were developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in 2009 and has since been implemented and mandated to regulate teachers and the teaching profession, providing accreditation from 2012 (AITSL, 2011b). The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) "are a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality. They define the work of teachers and make explicit the elements of high-quality, effective teaching in 21st-century schools that will improve educational outcomes for students. The Standards do this by providing a framework that makes clear the knowledge, practice and professional engagement required across teachers' careers (AITSL, 2011, p. 3)." It was initially developed with a strong belief that it "will position the profession to improve student outcomes and also result in teachers being more highly valued in the community" (BOSTES, 2015).

These standards outline theoretically and empirically supported teacher knowledge and skills that "guide professional learning, practice and engagement...and contribute positively to the public standing of the profession" (AITSL, 2011b, p. 2). Table 1 lists the APST and the domains of teaching that categorises them.

Table 1
Australian professional standards for teachers (2011)

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

In its current form, the APST covers "epistemological dimensions of teachers' work (what a teacher must know and be able to do), but they have little to say in the ontological domain (Taylor, 2006). The epistemological dimensions ensure that teachers have the required content, pedagogical knowledge, and skills to teach effectively. It is interesting to note that whilst the APST was developed to define teacher quality, the non-cognitive skills of teachers are not clearly articulated. These non-cognitive skills have strong theoretical and empirical evidence to support effective teaching (Collie et al., 2020; Collie, 2021; Collie & Martin, 2017; Kachchhap & Horo, 2021).

There has been an attempt to map non-cognitive skills to the existing standards broadly by Durksen and Klassen (2018). However, their work assumes that non-cognitive skills are embedded in the epistemological elements of teachers' professional knowledge and practice. This assumption is problematic because it implies that the measurement and implementation of knowledge and skills described in the standards will also develop non-cognitive skills. Consequently, it risks the strong development of non-cognitive skills and deviates from practice, where specific scales are available to measure these skills. Some of the most common non-cognitive skills supported by research evidence include interpersonal skills to develop teacher-student relationships (Martin & Collie, 2019), motivation (Korthagen & Evelein, 2016; Collie et al., 2019), self-efficacy (Pedota, 2015; Loughland, 2019), resilience (Gu, 2014) and adaptability (Collie & Martin, 2016; Loughland, 2019; Collie et al., 2020). The lack of these skills can lead to the issue of teacher burnout, as teaching embodies labour by implementing energy and expression, which brings forth fatigue and can take a toll on emotional capacity (Connell, 2009).

Therefore, given a range of research evidence on the critical roles of these non-cognitive skills, there is a need to review the APST to embed these skills explicitly. The critical review of the APST may reshape policy and generate a renewed focus on teacher selection, preparation and accreditation. Also, it will provide a stronger focus on building skills that have been proven to positively impact student learning and teacher retention.

Courses of Action

Despite several criticisms of the standards, including their limited and reductive nature (Mockler, 2013), research evidence shows that they play a critical role in shaping teacher practices and policies, influencing teacher preparation, selection, and accreditation (Loughland & Ellis, 2016). The ITE curriculum is designed to ensure all courses are mapped to the standards, including professional experience, which provides opportunities for ITE students to apply theoretical knowledge to gain practical experience relating to the various standards. This is evident in the assessment of Professional Experience courses, where students' interim report requires them to reflect on how they have demonstrated and understood the standards (Loughland & Ellis, 2016). Also, the APST recognises and provides accreditation for teachers who have reached certain levels of professional growth, demonstrating deeper engagement with the standards in further complex contexts across four career stages: graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead teachers (AITSL, 2011b). Due to this strong alignment of practices and policies to standards, it is imperative that they should reflect a holistic picture of teacher knowledge, skills and attributes supported by research evidence.

While successful teachers need to be highly knowledgeable both in content and pedagogy, positing cognitive skills as a significant factor in teacher quality and selection, academic skills are not a strong predictor of teacher effectiveness and retention that influences student success (Guarino et al., 2006; Borman & Dowling, 2017). Instead, teachers' non-cognitive skills contribute to their success, well-being and

job satisfaction. A summary of research evidence showing that non-cognitive skills influence both students and teachers is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Influences of Teachers' Non-cognitive skills on Teachers and Students

Teachers' non-Cognitive skills	Influence on teachers	Influence on students	Study
Interpersonal skills	Increase positive connection between teacher and students, fostering warmth, care, and support.	Develop beliefs and values that align with teachers, such as increased self-regulation and goal striving, driving engagement and achievement.	Martin & Collie (2019)
Motivation	Teacher behaviour and style is more autonomous-supportive, where teachers seek to understand students' perspectives and support their learning needs.	Satisfy students' basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness, increasing engagement, self-regulation and intrinsic motivation.	Korthagen & Evelein (2016); Collie et al. (2019)
Self-efficacy	Build supportive and encouraging teaching behaviour to influence students' learning and success positively; increase retention rates.	Enhance sense of belonging and connection which increases academic self-image and success.	Pedota (2015); Loughland (2019)
Resilience	Develop a sense of moral purpose and vocational commitment to positively interact with students and build supportive relationships with parents; regulate stress into a positive connection with the external environment in which they work; increase teacher retention.	Build trusting teacher-student relationships to increase students' motivation and endeavour to achieve; increased classroom dynamics.	Gu (2014)
Adaptability	Successful adjustment to and management of changing circumstances that are common in teaching work such as students' needs, interaction with colleagues, changes within school routine and activities and integrating new knowledge gained from professional learning.	Increased academic achievement and buoyancy, school enjoyment and satisfaction in life; hold greater beliefs about intelligence being malleable and able to grow; perceived greater control of their academic outcomes, reducing detrimental outcomes.	Collie & Martin (2016), Loughland (2019); Collie et al. (2020)

These non-cognitive skills are not explicitly embedded in the ATPS, but their importance is recognised in literature and also evident in existing practices. In the current policies for ITE student selection (AITSL, 2015), there are mechanisms for ITE program providers to assess non-cognitive skills. For example, at the University of New South Wales, undergraduate pre-service teachers are required to submit a motivational statement during their first trimester of study (University of New South Wales, n.d.). Postgraduate pre-service teachers submit a personal statement before admission to express their intentions and reasons for becoming teachers (University of New South Wales, 2019a, 2019b). The University of Melbourne implements a Teacher Capability Assessment Tool before admission into their Master of Teaching degrees to assess non-cognitive skills for teacher suitability (University of Melbourne, 2020). Furthermore,

interviews are conducted post-ITE studies to assess the attributes and suitability of teachers before entering the workforce (NSW Government, 2018).

These processes have been implemented to account for non-cognitive skills. However, there are issues regarding their reliability and validity. Goldhaber et al. (2014) found that the reliability and validity of current assessment methods like interviews, personal statements, and references lack evidence. These assessments devalue non-cognitive skills in the current accreditation policy (AITSL, 2015). The assessment of these non-cognitive skills is left to the provider of ITE programs without standardisation by the APST (AITSL, 2015). Consequently, excluding non-cognitive skills in the APST reduces its significance in accredited ITE programs.

There are initiatives and implications on teacher selection developing externally from the current policy documents of teaching standards (AITSL, 2011b), selection (AITSL, 2015) and accreditation (AITSL, 2011a) which focus on non-cognitive skills. The Teacher Selection Project (2019) has developed EduSelect to collaborate with teacher education providers and government bodies to implement research-based tools for teacher selection. Some of the research and evidence-supported methods considered for assessing teachers and their non-cognitive skills include the situational judgement tests (Klassen et al., 2014; Durksen & Klassen, 2018) and multiple mini-interviews for selection (Griffin & Wilson, 2012). Context rich scenarios and problems are presented for candidates to solve and reflect on, assessing their implementation of non-cognitive skills.

Also, for in-service teachers, the roles of non-cognitive skills are recognised. This is evident with a large number of professional development programs designed to enhance teachers' non-cognitive skills such as self-efficacy (Stevens et al., 2013; Glackin, 2019), motivation (Cheon et al., 2018) and adaptability (Parsons et al., 2016). The implicit nature of the 6th standard of the APST, engage in professional learning, allows educational practitioners to develop their non-cognitive skills as they are required to 'engage in professional learning and improve practice' (AITSL, 2011b, p. 20) and 'apply professional learning and improve student learning' (AITSL, 2011b, p. 21). Moreover, these non-cognitive skills are becoming part of the hiring process where some schools use interviews to establish teachers' non-cognitive skills.

As discussed above, there are practices in both pre-service and in-service teachers that recognise the importance of these non-cognitive skills; however, there is a need for more strategic and explicit policy, framework and practices to provide supporting and enabling mechanisms for all teachers. Given the importance of these non-cognitive skills and the role of APST in shaping teacher practices, enacting policies and resource allocation to better support teachers, the APST should be reviewed to embed these non-cognitive skills explicitly. This will address the missing ontological component of the teacher standards (Taylor, 2016). Embedding non-cognitive skills into the standards and utilising them as developmental and scaffolding tools for teachers to identify their current level of knowledge, skill proficiency, and attributes would have a profound impact on supporting individual teachers (Skehan, 2018).

METHOD

We used Bacchi's (2009) "*What's the problem represented to be?*" (WPR) approach to analyse the APST. The "WPR approach is resource, or tool, intended to facilitate critical interrogation of public policies. It starts from the premise that what one proposes to do about something reveals what one thinks is problematic (needs to change)" (Bacchi, 2012, p.21). Using this WPR approach in analysing a policy, it reveals implicit representation of the problem why the policy was developed and needs to be implemented. Once the problem has been identified, the WPR approach scrutinises the problem and the sub-problems created by the problem itself. The aim of using the WPR approach is "to understand policy better than policy makers by probing the unexamined assumptions and deep-seated conceptual logics within implicit problem representations" (p.22). Bacchi's WPR approach has been widely used for analysing policies including national school exclusion policy in England and Scotland (Tawell, 2022), critical health communication research (Pringle, 2019), education policy (Stacey, 2017), government policy on teenage pregnancy (Komai, 2021), support for workforce policy (Beutler, 2018) and amongst others.

Given the success of using Bacchi's WPR approach in analysing a range of policies, we aim to critically analyse APST in a broader political context, focus on its problems, and offer possible solutions.

The WPR Framework

The six guide questions under WPR approach are presented below.

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced? (Bacchi, 2009, p.2).

Question 1 asks a straightforward question that clarifies the implicit problem represented in the policy. The policy usually presents proposals for change or solution, and through these proposals, the underlying problem can be reconstructed. WPR questions 2–6 then direct the analyst to probe the solution or proposal for change, asking about the: 'rationales for the proposal, deep-seated presuppositions underpinning the proposed change, possible silences in the understanding of what needs to change, and the effects that are likely to accompany this particular understanding of the "problem"' (Bacchi 2009, p. x).

Analyses of the Australian Professional Teaching Standards

Using these six questions, our analysis unpacks the assumptions that teaching standards and accreditation characterise and define quality teachers, the silences resulting from its selective and prescriptive nature and the effects of teacher centrality and standardisation, critiquing its current misuse for accountability instead of developmental purposes. In a neoliberal context, where standards and accountability dominate the discourse around teacher quality (Mockler, 2014), enhancing the APST with research and evidenced-based skills and qualities of effective teachers is paramount to ensure structure and quality in the teaching profession. In addition, the use of the standards from a developmental perspective will ensure positive consequential validity for their use.

We began the process of analysis by independently reading the APST document. We focused on finding an answer to Question 1, *What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy?* We examined the preamble of the document and explored the stated purpose of APST. We discussed our individual interpretations of the implicit problem represented in the APST. After gaining greater clarity of the problem represented in the policy, we continued to answer Questions 2-6. We adopted an iterative process and discussion every time we answered any of the questions.

FINDINGS

The results of our critical review of APST are presented below, following the six questions of the WPR approach.

Identification of the Problem

We both agreed that the implicit problem represented in APST is found in the Preamble under the subheadings, Professional standards for teachers. It states that,

Developing professional standards for teachers that can guide professional learning, practice and engagement facilitates the improvement of teacher quality and contributes positively to the public standing of the profession. The key elements of quality teaching are described in the Standards. They articulate what teachers are expected to know and be able to do at four career stages: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead (APST, p.2).

There are two problems that the APST is trying to address, that is, the low quality of teachers and the negative perception of the general public about the teaching profession. The latter problem is directly linked to the first one, such that when we have high-quality teachers, public perception of the educational system is also enhanced.

The use of APST for teacher selection, training, retention, and promotion is believed to promote teachers' quality. Hence, if the APST does not represent the holistic knowledge, skills and dispositions of effective teachers, another problem is represented in the policy - the disconnect between what defines effective teachers and the standards represented in APST.

What is not evident in the APST are the non-cognitive skills of teachers. Non-cognitive skills contribute to the characteristics of effective teachers, as demonstrated in Table 2.

The absence of non-cognitive skills in the APST signals the little importance placed on “human” side of teachers. Overall, there is a misrepresentation of effective teachers in the APST, as evident in the lack of connection between research evidence, policy and practice.

Assumptions Underlying the Representation of the Problem

The assumptions that underpin the problem represented can be understood through analysing the discourse that shapes it (Bacchi, 2009). That is, the category of teachers and the concept of quality teachers have been governed with critical lens and controlled in the education system by teacher standards and accreditation. Teacher standards have been shaped from international and national policy discourses around quality teaching and define the necessary skills of teachers to regulate the requirements and content for professional development programs. This is evident in the use of four levels of career stages with each standard defined for each stage. For example, “graduate teachers have completed a qualification that meets the requirements of a nationally accredited program of initial teacher education...On successful completion of their initial teacher education, graduate teachers possess the requisite knowledge and skills to plan for and manage learning programs for students” (APST, 2018, p.6). The next career stage is defined as proficient teachers. These teachers “meet the requirements for full registration or accreditation through demonstrating achievement of all the Standard Descriptors at this level. These teachers create effective teaching and learning experiences for their students (p.6). This is followed by “highly accomplished teachers are recognised as highly effective, skilled classroom practitioners and routinely work independently and collaboratively to improve their practice and the practice of colleagues. They are knowledgeable and active members of the school (p.7). The highest career stage is lead teachers. They are teachers who are “recognised and respected by colleagues, parents/carers and the community as exemplary teachers. They have demonstrated consistent and innovative teaching practice overtime. Inside and outside the school, they initiate and lead activities that focus on improving educational opportunities for all students (p.7).

The descriptions of the professional capabilities for each stage is based on the notion that if teachers perform all the standards, they will ensure effective learning and teaching. This is, however, a mechanistic way of representing effective teachers.

The standards are used for accreditation to certify the quality assurance of teachers. This ensures that the teaching industry employs suitable candidates for the profession, recognising and categorising them with accreditation stages across graduate, proficient, highly accomplished, and lead teacher levels (AITSL, 2011b). Accreditation of teachers also identifies effective and non-effective teachers dependent on whether the standards are demonstrated or not.

History Behind the Problem

Before the development of the APST, the Ramsey Report (2000), *Quality Matters*, articulated a lack of support for teacher quality and prompted for the introduction and regulation of teaching standards and professional accountability, accrediting teachers

and providing incentives for them to aspire to higher standards. The NSW Institute of Teachers was a successful recommendation of the Ramsey Report who shaped the Teacher Accreditation Act (NSW Government, 2004) to 'make provision for professional teaching standards and the accreditation of teachers in relation to those standards; and for other purposes' (p. 5). Moreover, the Melbourne Declaration aimed to 'attract, develop, support and retain a high-quality teaching and school leadership workforce in Australian schools' (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, p.11).

A strong belief underpins the development of APST as a framework for describing effective teachers that demonstration of these standards will result in effective teaching, and increasing student outcomes. Due to this belief, teachers' productivity and effectiveness is equated to attaining these standards. This is evident in how teacher career stages are described using the standards. In other words, the APST is both a measure of effectiveness and productivity by the mere demonstration of the standards even without necessarily linking them to improved student outcomes.

Silences of APST

As we have argued, the APST does not explicitly include the non-cognitive skills, thereby creating a few silences. Firstly, the focus on quality teachers does not account for equity. This posits teachers as a homogenous entity, but this undermines the range of their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, impacting their effectiveness. Secondly, the continuum of accreditation descriptions may not capture all performances, such as those beyond the highest expectations. Thirdly, it does not address the need for supporting and enabling mechanisms for teachers to realise the standards. These include the organisational, social and financial support to acquire these standards. In the current practices, these non-cognitive skills are implicitly embedded in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum and in-service teachers' professional development. Therefore, the silences contribute to the difficulty in defining teacher effectiveness, unable to capture the many variables that can shape and influence effective teachers.

Potential Effects of these Silences

Bacchi's (2009) identifies three effects of silences: (1) *discursive* effects set boundaries around what can be recognised as relevant; (2) *subjectification* effects denote the subject positions that are made available within particular discourses/knowledges; and (3) *lived* effects capture the material 'impact of problem representations on people's embodied existence' (Bacchi 2009, p. 70). Our analysis of the silences of APST revealed these effects. The silences in the APST, particularly the non-inclusion of non-cognitive skills, create discursive, lived and subjectification effects. The discourse around effective teaching revolves around meeting individual standards. This is evident in the APST where the descriptions of standards across career stages must be met by teachers for promotion. What really matters in the APST are the technical skills that define effective teaching. In addition, the APST puts teachers at the centre of effective students' learning without regard to socio-cultural and political context. In terms of the subjectification effect of the APST, teachers are subjectified, and as policy actors who

must demonstrate the standards to meet accountability measures. Teachers would think that they are ineffective if they have not met the APST. Thus, their teaching should revolve around meeting the APST to be called effective teachers. Thus, their success and effectiveness are judged by key stakeholders, including principals, other teachers, higher authorities and even politicians, if they have met the APST. The APST also has lived effects on teachers. Teachers would feel inadequate if they have not met the APST. In their quest to demonstrate all the standards, they tend to limit their exploration of new teaching approaches or skills outside the standards. In other words, APST puts a constraint on teacher agency to think outside the APST for fear of not meeting the standards, which consequently be labelled as ineffective teachers.

Teacher standards amplify the concept of standardisation to regulate what is considered good practice, dictating the values that can best influence students. This embodies a discourse that positions teachers as primarily responsible for student learning, creating the issue of teacher centrality where student outcomes are largely dependent on teachers. The APST shapes the initial teacher education curriculum, teacher accreditation, retention, and promotion. The representation of teacher quality based on standards containing only knowledge and skills signals what matters in the bureaucracy. In the quest to meet the accreditation and accountability functions of the standards, teachers' quality is reduced to these individual knowledge and skills. As such, they shape people's common understanding that effective teachers possess and demonstrate those standards, and beyond those standards, quality does not exist. This is particularly true for teachers who are aiming for higher accreditation status. They will aim to implement those standards at the level they aim for and prepare all evidence for their accreditation application. As the accreditation process is focused on evaluating how teachers have demonstrated those individual standards, teachers are more likely to focus their teaching on meeting those standards. Simply put, effective teaching is reduced to implementing those standards with little regard to what really best supports individual students learning more effectively.

The identified silences and effects in QPR Questions 4 and 5 raise potential areas for policy change of the APST. They also provide a point for rethinking how we define teacher effectiveness in more holistic way where we treat teachers as humans rather than machines.

Questioning the Problem

Given a range of research evidence on the critical roles of teacher non-cognitive skills, there is a need to review the APST to embed them explicitly. The issue of teacher quality has been an ongoing concern that even after a decade of the APST, research evidence suggest that teachers' quality is still relatively low. The report about low teacher quality may open up a new discussion if the APST really provides evidence for teacher quality or if the APST is insufficient to capture evidence of teacher quality.

The APST positions teachers as lacking the professional knowledge and skills, and hence, they need to demonstrate all those standards to be accredited. The strict adherence to these standards increases the responsabilisation of teachers. This problem

also manifests in the graduate teacher performance assessment (GTPA). This is the final assessment of pre-service teachers that bring all their learning experience, both in the university and in-school professional experience. The GTPA, drawn from the graduate standards of APST, serves as a summative assessment used for quality assurance mechanisms of graduate teachers. Pre-service teachers provide evidence of how they have demonstrated the standards in learning, teaching, and assessment. Pre-service teachers who have failed to meet the GTPA will not be eligible for graduation.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this paper is to critically review the APST using Bacchi's WPR approach. Our answers to the six questions contribute to understanding the issues associated with the APST and how it is used. Also, our analysis revealed interesting insights that present opportunities for policy improvement.

One significant result is the narrow view of effective teachers as described in the standards. As the standards are used to shape policy and practice to ensure that high-quality teachers can significantly impact student learning (Loughland & Ellis, 2016), without the inclusion of non-cognitive skills in the standards, current practices in ITE, teacher selection, and accreditation experience a discourse where these skills are not explicitly highlighted and measured and are viewed with little significance. Hence, APST does not fully support the development of holistic skills for teachers to become effective. The absence of non-cognitive skills in the APST signals the little importance placed on the ontological domains of teachers (Taylor, 2006). There is a misrepresentation of effective teachers in the APST, as evident in the lack of connection between research evidence, policy and practice. Consequently, the APST limits teachers' practices, including teacher selection, Initial Teacher Education (ITE), professional development and accreditation.

Another interesting result is how teachers are positioned in student learning. The APST shifts the discourse from effective teaching to effective teachers (Mockler, 2013), thus places on them the pressure and burden of responsibility (Connell, 2009). This shift puts teachers accountable for their performance and student outcomes (Loughland & Ellis, 2016). Accreditation of teachers also identifies effective and non-effective teachers dependent on whether the standards are demonstrated or not. This positions the role these neoliberal technologies of standards, accreditation and increased professionalism, plays in shaping accomplished teachers and effective teaching, developing a discourse of accountability and teacher quality for the successful learning of students (Ingvarson, 2010). In other words, teachers are subjectified, positioned as policy actors who must abide by the standards and demonstrate quality teacher attributes to ensure accountability measures for students' success. As policy actors, they enact policy either actively or passively in different contexts with varying levels of agency (Ball et al., 2011).

In addition, the standards present a powerful symbolism of how teachers are viewed as technicians with sets of specific skills. A greater focus on the definitive use of the APST to define and enhance teacher quality conceals the influences of teacher demographics

and students' context and background on teaching and learning (Mockler, 2014). The selection and implementation of non-cognitive skills in the standards as a representation of effective teaching should include other contributing factors and attributes of effective teachers, such as prior life experience and industry experience (Ito et al., 2020). The silences in the APST contribute to the difficulty in defining teacher effectiveness, unable to capture the many variables that can shape and influence effective teachers. This draws upon Skourdombis and Gale's (2013) view of the difficulty of measuring teacher quality and how narrow ways of measuring it shape its reductive nature.

Furthermore, the APST may function as a reductive rather than a developmental tool. Teacher standards shape policy and practice to ensure that the teaching profession is manned by accredited teachers who demonstrate the standards, and hence, are perceived as effective teachers. However, by using these standards for teacher accreditation, the process becomes high-stake in nature, requiring teachers to demonstrate an understanding of each standard, and hence, a regulatory function for accountability is amplified (Loughland & Ellis, 2016). Furthermore, the prescriptive nature of APST, which requires teachers to meet and demonstrate a level of performance to be accredited, is reductive (Singh et al., 2019). Teachers will only focus on those standards and aim to achieve them without critically reflecting if their performance related to those standards significantly improves student learning. The teaching standards become the ultimate focus of teaching rather than using the standards to support teachers to become effective in teaching. This undermines the developmental potential of the standards to shape and support teachers. For the standards to function as developmental by nature, they must be used for "self-assessment, reflection on practise and professional conversations (Loughland & Ellis, 2016, p.67)" but not the ultimate measure of teacher effectiveness.

Based on the findings and the discussion above, we discuss a policy proposal to address the limitations of the current APST. The APST should integrate non-cognitive skills explicitly as the standards shape practices (Loughland & Ellis, 2016) as supported by appropriate policies. The following considerations should be made to support the proposed revision of the APST.

Firstly, an evaluation of all non-cognitive skills is needed to select those with the most significant influence on teacher self-efficacy and student learning. Inclusion criteria should be used, like non-cognitive skills that foster stronger teacher retention rates and effectiveness in raising student outcomes, as these traits shape high-quality teachers who raise the standards and impact educational outcomes (Gu, 2014).

Secondly, a continuum of descriptors should accompany these attributes to illustrate various proficiency levels across career stages. This continuum will clarify increasing depths of understanding that can support teacher professional development. There have been attempts to develop continua for some non-cognitive skills like self-efficacy (Personalise Learning, 2016). In current practice, almost all non-cognitive skills are measured using Likert type scales with teachers doing self-assessment with answers from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These scales have little value in professional development as they do not describe performance specifically (Griffin & Francis, 2018).

Developing rubrics that clearly and richly detail the expectations can identify and guide teachers through the continuum, serving a developmental purpose.

After the proposed revision of the standards, a review of its implications in teacher training, selection and accreditation should take place at various levels of proficiency across career stages. ITE curricula need to be evaluated and map the courses offered to the revised APST to identify gaps, which courses lack non-cognitive skills, and close them with the addition of direct training and continuous monitoring and assessment. This can be in the form of explicit teaching and modelling of non-cognitive skills, with a more in-depth focus on the practical development of these skills. Other practices can include measuring positive teacher-student relationships multiple times throughout a pre-service teachers' professional experience practicums to monitor their development and identify specific support to develop and enhance these skills. Moreover, further integration of situational judgement tests and multi mini-interviews (Teacher Selection Project, 2019) can assist in establishing a baseline for non-cognitive skills to be measured and assessed as pre-service teachers develop and are taught how to regulate and apply them to their practice. Following ITE, a systematic approach to measuring and assessing the non-cognitive skills of new teachers against the new standards will ensure teachers with a confident and positive mindset will be employed at schools. Similarly, new teachers who fall short of the requirements should be guided with interventions to develop these skills further to meet the expectations before employment as a teacher satisfactorily.

For in-service teachers, establishing in-school mechanisms can assist in monitoring their non-cognitive skills. Teachers can use self-assessment tools and regular situational judgement tests to assess their non-cognitive skills such as self-efficacy and motivation. With the new APST in place, schools can utilise teacher data against clear expectations to identify teachers who need support through further professional development. These non-cognitive skills can be developed through deliberate integration with current initiatives such as the Quality Teaching Framework (State of NSW, Department of Education and Training, 2008) and Productive Pedagogies (Mills, 2009) framework, which serves to support teachers to be more effective in addressing the learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds. These frameworks can provide opportunities for teachers to develop knowledge of these non-cognitive skills and use them in their classroom, then engage in critical reflection to determine how contextual factors influence the development and operationalisation of such skills.

The proposed restructuring of the standards will reshape policy and generate a renewed focus on teacher selection, preparation and accreditation. Also, it will provide a stronger focus on building skills that have been proven to impact teaching effectiveness and student learning. It might even address the issue on teacher attrition as these non-cognitive skills are directly related to their workplace exhaustion, disengagement and commitment (Collie et al., 2018).

As argued above, the APST is integral in shaping policies that influences teaching quality, effectiveness and the outcome for students. Research confirms the importance of

non-cognitive skills in teacher effectiveness in supporting student learning. This proposal is warranted to reshape policy and practice that will support teachers.

CONCLUSION

This paper critically analyses the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and how it defines effective teachers. We used Bacchi's (2009) WPR approach using the six guide questions. Despite the assumptions underpinning the standards, the critiques on their reductive nature, the implicit exclusion of other attributes of successful teachers and their potential negative effects on teachers, they continue to become an influential policy that shapes initial teacher education curricula, teacher accreditation, and professional development program, teaching practices. Our analysis highlights the strong representation of the epistemological domains and the absence of the ontological dimensions, including the non-cognitive skills of teachers. These non-cognitive skills have been proven by research to characterise high-quality teachers who can significantly increase student outcomes. What is needed is the inclusion of non-cognitive skills in APST to provide a more explicit framework for defining effective teachers, which can be used to support teachers to progress across different levels of performance. The APST should provide clearer descriptors, outcomes measures, and an equitable assessment process to positively support teachers in developing these skills to influence students' engagement and outcomes. Also, the standards should be used for developmental purposes instead of misusing the standards to label teachers. They should support individual teachers to reach new proficiency levels by providing the appropriate personal and professional support. With teaching being a complex and nuanced profession, the standards with non-cognitive skills can help form a scaffold and guide teachers in developing attributes that can positively impact themselves and their teaching, resulting in increased student outcomes.

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