

SELF-MANAGING SCHOOLS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY: THE PROFESSIONAL

RECOGNITION PROGRAM IN VICTORIA'S SCHOOLS OF THE FUTURE

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INTRODUCTION

Public school systems in countries such as Britain, Canada and New Zealand have implemented various models of school self-management during the past decade, including the management of staff. The focus of this paper is the relationship between self-management and the development of professional community. Is teachers' work in self-managing schools being managed in ways that promote the kind of professional communities and networks many now identify as essential for effective professional development and high quality teaching?

(Little and McLaughlin, 1991; Little, 1993; Fullan, 1994; Corcoran & Goertz, 1996; Newman & Associates, 1996; McLaughlin & Oberman, 1996)

Some research suggests that participative decision-making and local school management have a positive effect on teachers' and students' work. For example, American studies by Lieberman et al. (1991), White (1992) and Bryk et al. (1993), suggest that site-based management leads

teachers to engage more in sharing ideas, taking risks, experimenting with different instructional strategies, and professional development; and to "greater student interest, enthusiasm and learning" (Smylie, 1994, p.140). The move towards self-managing schools has also been associated with the removal of subject superintendents and a reduction in subject department balkanisation in schools (Goddard, 1992), the formation of a common vision and core values among school staff (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988, 1992), and the development of teamwork and collaboration (Ladwig et al., 1994).

Other researchers, however, have pointed to a diminution of initiative and a culture of compliance engendered by increasing regulation of teachers' work in 'locally managed schools' (Smyth, 1993; Ball, 1994; Nicholls & Ozga, 1994). Moreover, Smylie (1994) found that few of the work redesign schemes he reviewed, had influenced teaching practices for the better and that many of them had increased status stratification between managers and teachers, thereby frustrating attempts to promote schools as professional learning communities. According to Huckman and Hill's (1994) research, principals in locally managed schools find it difficult or invidious to identify exceptional teachers in the absence of a credible, independent professional certification structure, such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the United States.

Against the background of these equivocal overseas research findings, we decided to conduct an Australian case study of a recent development

in one state. In 1992 the newly elected government of Victoria introduced a system of self-managing schools, called Schools of the Future, for the state's 1700 primary and secondary schools. Three years later, in March 1995 it launched a new scheme for managing staff in Schools of the Future called the Professional Recognition Program (PRP). Underlying these developments in Victoria has been the assumption that school self-management is a precondition for restructuring teachers' work and building teaching teams (Caldwell, 1996). We wanted to examine whether the Professional Recognition Program, as the staff management component of Schools of the Future, was compatible with conditions that facilitated the building of professional learning communities necessary for the enhancement of teaching and learning.

Before outlining our study in more detail, a thumbnail sketch of the context and nature of the PRP needs to be provided.

CONTEXT

The new conservative government came into power in Victoria during 1992 after ten years of Labor government. Significant parts of its agenda were to reduce public spending, weaken the influence of trade unions, and replace centrally determined industrial awards with local workplace agreements. Change occurred quickly. By 1996, the state teaching service had been reduced by some 8000 teachers (out of a total of approximately 45,000), about 300 schools had been forced to close,

spending per student had declined by 9%, staff/student ratios had increased and retention rates in public schools had fallen. As a result, Victoria now spends less per student than most states; before 1992, it was one of the highest spenders.

Consistent with its philosophy of deregulation, the Victorian government sought to devolve responsibility for education to the local level under its Schools of the Future program. This program requires each school to enter a contract (or charter) with the state government, setting down the school's goals and how resources are to be deployed to achieve them. More generally, it requires schools to adopt corporate culture, corporate structures and corporate processes. Some see this as a step toward the privatisation of schools, and a change in the government's role from being a provider of education to that of being a purchaser of education delivered by private providers.

The Victorian state education department designed the PRP to be an integral component of its Schools of the Future Program. The teachers' union was excluded from the design process. The union saw the PRP as an attempt to seduce teachers out of union membership because the program offered teachers an instant 6% salary increase and senior staff an opportunity to "translate" from existing the pay system to new leading teacher positions with access to annual bonuses.

Participation in the PRP was voluntary during the first year of its implementation (1995). Teachers who chose to join the PRP had to leave

the industrial award. The government hoped that most teachers would opt into the PRP since it involved an over-the-award pay rise. In the event, few did.

In March 1993, the Victorian Government closed down the State Industrial Relations Commission. This forced the state school teacher unions to apply, through the Australian Education Union, to the Federal Industrial Relations Commission for a modified, negotiated version of the PRP to be incorporated into a system-wide award. The application succeeded and in July 1996 the PRP became part of the Teachers (Victoria Government Schools) Conditions of Employment Award. Participation in the PRP ceased being voluntary; by industrial law, it applied to all teachers. But, in the eyes of many teachers, the PRP was viewed with suspicion and cynicism.

Since the program is commonly referred still to as PRP we have retained that usage in this article.

THE PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION PROGRAM

The PRP provides guidelines and enhances the capacity of principals to carry out a number of staff management responsibilities in self-managing schools. These include local selection of teaching staff, evaluation of new teachers to confirm suitability for employment, and annual performance reviews geared to incentives and professional development planning. As a result of industrial negotiation and

arbitration, the PRP now provides a three level career structure for teachers - levels 1, 2 and 3. Teachers at levels 2 and 3 are called leading teachers (LTs). At each level, teachers must satisfactorily complete an induction period before their appointment is confirmed.

While similar in several respects to the previous career structure, the Advanced Skills Teacher classification (Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1997), the PRP differs in that it:

- * requires every teacher to undergo an annual performance review.
- * calls on principals, or their nominees, to assess teacher performance against criteria developed by the (Victorian) Standards Council for the Teaching Profession.
- * makes incremental salary progression for Level 1 teachers dependent upon successful performance, assessed at their annual review.
- * allows for accelerated progression on the incremental scale for Level 1 teachers and offers them special payments for undertaking designated tasks.
- * offers LT 2s and 3s two substantive salary levels (appointment and accreditation).
- * provides LT 2s and 3s with an opportunity to gain bonuses at three salary levels (fully effective, superior performance, and outstanding performance).

In Victoria, most teachers reach the top of the Level 1 salary scale (called sub-division 12) after nine years of teaching. As the average

age of teachers is well over forty, most of them have been at the top of the Level 1 scale for some years and do not receive a salary increment for 'passing' the annual review of their performance.

Levels 2 and 3 are designated leadership positions within a school management team, such as department head and year-level, professional development, and curriculum co-ordinator. Leading Teachers 2 and 3 have a slightly reduced (20%) teaching load to carry out these functions.

The total number of leading teachers, assistant principals and principals a school can have is fixed at about 30%. Teachers openly compete for these positions, which schools must advertise across the state. In terms of career structure models, progress to Leading Teacher Levels 2 and 3 appears to be a mixture of career ladder (job-based pay) and career development (skill and knowledge-based pay) models (Bacharach, 1990: Conley and Odden, 1995).

As part of Schools of the Future, the PRP has made principals responsible for a formidable range of teacher evaluation functions. They now decide, in effect, who gains entry to the teaching profession, who gains annual salary increments, who shall be recognised as having attained advanced professional standards (for Leading Teacher positions), and which senior staff shall be awarded annual salary bonuses.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In considering a conceptual framework for the study we used Louis, Kruse and Marks' (1996) definition of professional communities as those characterised by shared professional standards, de-privatisation of practice, focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, and collaboration. We also used Darling-Hammond's (1986, 1992) idea that professional accountability requires teachers to accept strong processes of peer review as an everyday part of their work practice and a mutual obligation to keep up with profession-defined teaching standards grounded in the subjects and the level they teach. Further research relevant to the PRP was found in the literature on work redesign (Smylie, 1994), career structures and pay systems (Lawler, 1990, 1992; Conley and Odden, 1995; Mohrman, Mohrman and Odden, 1996), incentives and performance management (Elmore, 1996; Jacobson, 1992), teacher leadership, professional community and teacher change (Fullan, 1994; Little, 1993; Louis et al., 1996), and new developments in teaching standards and performance assessment (NBPTS, 1989; Jaeger and Bond, 1995; Haertel, 1991).

Smylie's review of the work redesign literature provided a useful framework for teasing out some theories about the relationship between professional community and how the PRP actually might influence what teachers knew and did for the better. Smylie defines work redesign as the, "Alteration of jobs or systems of jobs with the intent of increasing the quality of employees' work experience and their on-the-job productivity"(1994, p.131-132). He noted that the most prevalent forms of work redesign are career ladders, leadership roles

for teachers (for example, master, mentor, lead teacher roles),
participative decision-making and school-based management.

Smylie summarises some possible mechanisms for the way work redesign
can connect to the classroom. These include: control, where the
regulatory process is compliance; motivation, where the regulatory
process is self-determination or choice; and learning, where the
regulatory process is capacity building - greater opportunities and
incentives for development of knowledge and skills that may lead to
change in practice.

Typically, work redesign efforts start from the outside looking in;
they ask first about the social and reward structures of teachers'
work; then, if at all, they ask about the work of students. The
alternative (McLaughlin and Lichtenstein, 1993) starts from the inside
and asks first about how students learn and what classroom experiences
best promote that learning; it then asks what roles teachers must play
in creating these experiences and how teacher development and work may
best be organised to support those classroom roles. For this to
happen, according to Smylie, teacher work redesign needs to move in the
direction of building 'professional community' because,

In these communities, teachers' work is collaborative, coordinated,
interdependent, and focused first and foremost on student learning.
These communities can demonstrate the effective exercise of the
control, motivation and learning mechanisms. (1994, p.165)

Though unarticulated in the Victorian Department of Education documents, there appears to be elements of each of these mechanisms in the PRP. The PRP includes control mechanisms through teacher evaluation, supervision and managerial accountability. Potential motivating elements within the PRP include greater responsibility for some teachers, incentives and bonuses for meeting school and system objectives, and proposed recognition in career and promotion terms for increased teaching quality and extra responsibilities. Learning or capacity-building, the third mechanism, while not emphasised in the PRP, is contained in the aspiration to promote greater teamwork through the leading teachers.

From all of this literature we built the following characteristics into a concept of professional community:

- * collaboration, trust, teamwork, and high morale among school staff, rather than hierarchy, status and distance.
- * a professional career path which rewards teachers for high quality teaching.
- * the operation of professional accountability, as opposed to managerial accountability.
- * the use of valid professional standards and performance assessments for the evaluation of teacher's work.
- * a focus on student learning.

Our research questions were formulated around these characteristics and were designed to investigate the PRP's capacity to influence the promotion of professional community and thereby teacher development and student learning.

SOURCES OF DATA

The study was conducted in two phases toward the end of the first full year of the PRP's implementation. In the first phase we interviewed 21 teachers and principals in four Melbourne high schools. We asked them to describe the way the PRP operated in their school and their views on various aspects of the program, in relation to the characteristics of professional community listed above. From the interview material, we selected a range of representative statements made about the PRP. These formed the basis of a questionnaire we distributed in the second phase of the study to a larger sample of teachers and principals in twenty metropolitan high schools. Our intention here was to gain an indication of the extent to which views expressed in the interviews were held by teachers and principals in other schools. Three schools said that pressure of work made it inadvisable for them to ask teachers to respond. In a letter to each school we requested that the questionnaire be distributed to a sample of 15-20 teachers chosen from an alphabetical list of staff; that is, we asked them to choose every third or fourth teacher on the list depending on the size of the school. We also asked all accredited leading teachers, principals and assistant principals to complete the questionnaire. Some 350

questionnaires were returned, a response rate of over 70%.

FINDINGS

In each of the sections below the findings are presented in two parts.

First, we present a range of representative quotes from the interview phase of the study, to give some flavour of the types of issues and opinions that emerged. Then we present findings from the survey, which tested out key propositions formed from an analysis of the interview material.

When quotes from the interviews are used the source is designated by the following abbreviations: L1 = Teacher Level 1; LT2/3 = Leading Teacher Level 2 or 3; AP = Assistant Principal; P = Principal. The numbers following the abbreviation distinguish the interviewees. Tables are used to report the survey results and the numbers next to the statements in the tables indicate their position in the questionnaire. When tables include breakdowns, an asterisk indicates statistically significant differences between groups at the .01 level.

Impact of the PRP on the quality of teaching and staff workloads

An assumption underlying our study was that if the PRP strengthened professional community then the quality of teaching and learning would improve. Consistent with that assumption, we asked school staff what impact the PRP had made upon the quality of their work.

Positive responses

Some teachers reported that the PRP annual review process led to a number of positive changes in their working lives. It forced them to take time out to reflect upon the quality of their work and their career directions. It provided them with a "critical friend" and "sympathetic ear". And it gave them a tangible reason to collect evidence of their best work, namely, having to convince their reviewer that personal goals had been achieved. Without the PRP, said some teachers, they would not have done these things. Not because they couldn't, just that, given the pressures of life, they wouldn't. In fact, until the PRP, they hadn't. For example:

The PRP has lots of advantages for me. For the first time in my teaching career I've been formally required to sit down and formally document my PD needs and a program. I've been forced to sit down and focus on my future and identify my strengths and weaknesses and ways to improve. For a long time we've done things automatically; we've been so busy and we get caught up in the day to day things. The PRP makes us think whether what we are doing is sound practice. (L1/5)

Reviewing goals helps identify what you want to achieve. It is not onerous, it does focus people. One goal is in the charter - to increase the use of computers in the curriculum and to improve teaching and learning in the school. (LT2/2)

Reservations

When questioned closely, though, most teachers concluded that while the PRP might assist school development, it makes little difference to their own professional performance. In fact, the vast majority of teachers we talked to could not cite a single instance of where their work with students in the classroom had changed as a result of the PRP - and we pressed them fairly hard on this point. Generally, teachers found it easier to identify the negative than the positive impact of the PRP. At best the PRP was seen by some school staff as making virtually no tangible difference to their work, one way or the other.

To quote a few of them:

I'm not changing what I'm doing. The PRP has made no difference. There has been no change to my classroom practice, no extra jobs. Perhaps I maintain my record book better. (L1/3)

The PRP has made no difference to my classroom practice. (LT2/4)

So far the PRP has had no effect on teachers' attitudes, teamwork etc.

I'm sceptical if it will ever make a difference because there is no time for sharing and cooperation and no incentive. (LT3/3)

Table 1 indicates that nearly 75% of teachers believe the PRP will have little impact on their own teaching. They were slightly more optimistic

that the PRP would affect others' practice. Changing teaching practice is, of course, not the sole purpose of the annual review and performance appraisal processes. As some comments above indicate, teachers said an annual accountability check made them stop and think, but questions arise here about the cost effectiveness of performance management when most teachers do not see it as an avenue for changing practice.

TABLE 1: Impact of the PRP on the quality of teaching (percentages)

Impact on workload: More work, less time, overloaded teaching

This study confirms other research (Townsend, 1996) and anecdotal reports about major workload problems in Victoria's Schools of the Future. The PRP has exacerbated workload demands and forced leading teachers to cut corners. In practice, leading teachers' spend over half of their time performing managerial duties, yet they receive only a 20% administration time allowance for this work; that is, 80% of their formally allocated workload consists of teaching. To survive, the LTs have to "live off past preparation" and "teach on the run". As a result, their "teaching suffers" in a situation where they are expected, by virtue of being LTs, to "show exemplary skills in teaching". For them, the PRP has meant, "a little bit more pay for a lot of extra work". More specifically, said some LTs:

There is so much admin work to do that it crowds out teaching and

learning. Three periods a week is not adequate. It would be better if I had .5 teaching and .5 admin. (LT3/3)

The annual reviews will increase the workload of the reviewers. They have nine teachers to review and at a VCE (heavy marking) time. They need a time allowance to do it properly. (LT2/1)

[In addition to teaching I have to] document where all the Year 7-10 maths students are at, in keeping with the assessment and reporting policy; pilot computerised reporting; oversee the development of the Year 7-10 reporting booklets; evaluate the PEEL project, which aims to get staff to try new teaching strategies; and generally carry out activities concerned with curriculum leadership, staff management, and student management. (LT3/3)

Table 2 indicates that these views on the significant increase in workload under Schools of the Future are widely shared, especially by leading teachers. The net effect of the reform is a reduction in time and energy for the core business of teaching. Time for professional collaboration and evaluation is a luxury these teachers can rarely afford.

TABLE 2: Effects of the PRP on workload (percentages)

Staff in the four schools stressed that, along with other reforms, the PRP has increased the prominence of administration work over teaching work. In the competition for scarce resources, administration receives

priority. Leading teachers worry more about being unprepared for staff meetings than being unprepared for lessons. Assistant principals are paid more for low level organisational chores than teachers are paid for high level teaching work. In their words:

I do teaching preparation at weekends. There's no time during the week. Teaching should come first and admin second. But I'm more tired in class these days. The come back if you don't do admin work is fiercer still and more has more ramifications. (LT3/1)

What the LT 2s and 3s say is, when have I got the time to do what I'm employed to do - teach! (AP/1)

Impact of the PRP on staff relationships and professional community

A professional community is characterised by trust, teamwork and high morale among school staff, rather than hierarchy, status and distance. To a limited extent, the PRP promoted these qualities within members of the managerial class. It did so by offering bonuses to leading teachers, assistant principals and principals who achieve specified goals of targets. Achieving these targets placed senior staff under pressure to work together as a group. In some cases it led to increased interdependence and collaboration. As several LTs explained:

Other leading teachers have similar goals so we get more of a team approach. To achieve her performance management plan goals, the

principal depends on us. (LT3/5)

The assistant principals and leading teacher performance management plans have to be linked to the principal's performance management plan.

I wrote up the principal's performance management plan and mine is identical. We have team goals and therefore the same bonus. (AP/1)

A wedge between school managers and teachers

However, while the bonus system may have fostered a sense of professional community among the senior staff it drove a wedge between the management class and the teaching class in schools. L1 teachers resented their achievements being used as evidence by LTs, assistant principals and principals to claim bonuses. Members of the management class acknowledged the validity of the L1 teachers' feelings and the difficulties they posed for the development of teamwork. For example:

I've a personal problem with claiming work of other people as my own. I give LACs autonomy. They do the work. (P/1)

There will be resentment among teachers if they did the work and others got the bonus. Also, with only 5-10% for bonuses there will be rivalry.

(LT3/1)

Bonuses work against teamwork, they make it harder for teachers to develop teams. Some subdivision 12 people are asking - why am I being

asked to do this and this? - whose performance management plan is this in (to help principals get s bonus)? (P/2)

Some principals gave LTs responsibility for conducting the annual reviews of L1 teachers. This drove the wedge even deeper. Many LTs expressed discomfort about the effects of the new career structure on their relationship to L1 teachers. Within the new structure they found themselves defined as part of the school management team by their L1 teacher colleagues. In a characteristic comment, one LT pointed out that:

The PRP will increase the hierarchical structures because previously LT 2s and 3s wouldn't have been involved in reviewing colleagues. If on a panel, will I be an advocate of the staff member or the admin? There won't be a willingness among staff to review each other's work. They will have to be dragged kicking and screaming. It is less threatening if staff develop a plan and are accountable for achieving their goals. But there is some resistance to "plans" because of the time involved and the increase in workloads and the lack of trust. In industry, reviews are done by superordinates; that is, they do the extra work, not the particular staff member. (LT2/2)

Lowered morale

Virtually none of the staff we interviewed objected to incremental salary progression being dependent on satisfactory performance in the

annual review, in principle. In practice, however, most teachers said that the annual review cycle and performance-based incremental salary progression had lowered morale. They dismissed the PRP as yet another unproductive, hoop jumping exercise that did nothing to improve their teaching. These feelings were compounded by a sense of industrial powerlessness arising from the government's determination to exclude the teacher unions from policy decisions. Senior staff commented that:

Some teachers see the PRP as just another hoop to jump through, another impediment. Time is short. (LT2/2)

Staff have been demoralised totally by the PRP. We've had a team approach for years. Now because of the PRP no one wants to do anything. There have been so many changes and the PRP has come on the top of them. Teachers feel insecure, tired, they are bitching - I haven't seen this for years - for example, turning around and abusing others because they are irritated and saying things like, you haven't done this, you haven't ticked a box on the reports. Teachers feel demoralised because the PRP adds to the number of changes. (LT3/6)

The Teachers Union branch in the school is quiet now. We used to have a fairly significant branch. I attend AEU meetings but it's difficult because some regard me (assistant principal) as the enemy. Branch numbers are down to about half the staff. People have given up. They feel powerless because of the government's philosophy of not talking to the AEU. At first teachers were angry, now they've just given up.

(AP/2)

Increased competition

As with AST 2 and 3, the number of LT 2 and 3 positions in each school is limited by quotas. Competition for limited positions can impede school improvement (a goal of Schools of the Future) by stifling the development and maintenance of norms such as sharing, trust, openness and experimentation. Apparently this had already happened in the schools we visited. Staff reported instances of teachers being pitted against each other, rather than pitted against professional standards and trustworthy teacher evaluation processes.

The PRP has made staff more competitive, to win brownie points.

(LT3/2)

I worry that the PRP will pit teachers against each other and stop them working collaboratively; for example, stop them saying, 'I'll teach your class 'text' and you teach my class 'narrative'. Teachers are starting to say, I need to prove that this is my piece of work. (LT2/4)

It's bitchy here because so many teachers are at level 12 and they can't advance. (LT3/6)

The Union has the egalitarian argument, a worry about one teacher being paid more than another. The PRP could divide one teacher against the

other. (LT3/1)

Overall

Table 3 indicates that, according to teachers, the PRP is not promoting greater teamwork and openness in schools. Evidently, few believe that the bonuses used in performance management benefit the work of teachers and schools. Also, over 75% of teachers said the PRP does not improve morale, collaboration or openness in schools. Even 43% of principals had doubts about the effect of the PRP on morale.

TABLE 3: Impact of the PRP on staff relationships (percentages)

The PRP as a career path

In a professional community the norms of high morale, collegiality and teamwork do not mean that everyone must get the same salary; they do not mean that teachers can not be given extra pay for developing advanced levels of professional knowledge and skill; they do not mean that teachers should be denied a career path in teaching.

The search for a career structure that genuinely values high quality teaching has proved elusive. The problem is particularly acute in Australia because most teachers reach the top of the incremental scale in their early 30s, unlike the case in most OECD countries. None of the

teachers we interviewed believed they had reached their potential or top level of performance at thirty. There was still much to get better at. Previous teachers' pay scales had rarely recognised this and the PRP career structure was no different in their view.

Staff at the four schools in our interview study had come to the conclusion that being an excellent teacher was not regarded as sufficient for promotion. So far as they could see, what the PRP rewards teachers for is undertaking extra administrative duties, not improvements in their teaching. These quotes are representative:

The way the career structure is set up I can't go further and just be a classroom teacher. The system doesn't reward top operators in the classroom. They aren't encouraged to stay there. I've got to take on extra responsibilities. We are told by the DSE (Directorate of School Education) that it is no longer acceptable just to be a teacher; we are told that what happens in the classroom is not the most important thing. There is the expectation that there are other things we should be doing If I want to get more money I must take on more non-teaching work, more jobs. (L1/5)

To be simply a classroom teacher is not a viable option. You need to be contributing more widely to the school, to get involved in after hours activities, particularly in a school with social disadvantage where there is pressure on teachers to deliver experiences to students they don't have - this means weekend work etc. (L1/4)

From the moment the tags (promotional positions) came out, a career for teachers in terms of advances in knowledge and skill wasn't on. All the tagged positions are admin jobs. We have no tagged position called master classroom teacher Schools of the Future makes teachers into managers. (P/1)

Table 4 indicates that while half the teachers thought the new career structure was better than the previous Advanced Skills Teacher scheme (Ingvarson and Chadbourne, 1997), few believed that promotion under the PRP was based on quality of practice or that the PRP gave as much recognition to professional practice as to administration. Table 4 also indicates a widespread feeling among teachers, leading teachers and principals that career pathways should be available to those who chose to deepen their teaching skills. The PRP doesn't allow principals to offer teachers extra pay for deeper and broader skills - only for management skills. Basically, the PRP career structure says to teachers, "We'll pay you more and you can stay teaching, so long as you take on a lot more admin."

TABLE 4: The professional recognition program as a career path
(percentages)

The Professional Recognition Program and teacher accountability

Many school staff saw the PRP's main purpose as accountability, not professional recognition. They were not opposed to accountability, provided it was based on a professional model; that is, a model which requires mutual report and review. They were opposed, however, to the supervision model of accountability embodied in the PRP. The line management basis for this model made teachers feel the PRP was a way for the administration to check up on them - a form of "snoopervision". Also, some teachers saw the model as making them accountable to managers for implementing government policy rather than being accountable to colleagues for the quality of their teaching. For instance:

The PRP is really on about accountability. This was missing in AST-1 The PRP is a measuring device for accountability; making teachers do what they should be doing - whole school plans etc. It's not really an incentive. (AP/1)

The main message teachers are getting about the PRP is that it's about accountability, not recognition. (LT3/3)

It's difficult to isolate the PRP as a factor covering teachers' career because the issues are clouded by other policy initiatives such as Schools of the Future and management of the educational budget. The PRP

focuses in on accountability. (L1/4)

We divided the staff up and allocated each LT 3 about four staff members to support and assist with the review and keep the principal class informed. This was received by the staff with scepticism because they thought it was a way of checking up on them. (P/3)

Table 5 indicates that accountability per se was not an issue for the teachers and principals surveyed. Most believed the PRP would lead to more accountability, and that this was quite appropriate. Over 70% of teachers agreed with the proposition that the PRP's main purpose was accountability to management. But teachers were much less convinced than principals that the actual mechanisms used in the PRP were an effective means of holding them accountable for using best practices. Teachers also indicated that they placed less value than principals on annual reviews generally.

The validity of PRP standards

Valid professional standards and performance assessment methods, and the capacity to enforce them, are critical to professions. Standards provide a necessary foundation for the evaluative work of professional communities. Standards for accomplished teaching, such as those of the National Council for Teaching Mathematics (1989) and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1989), provide long term goals for professional development. They make explicit the educational values

that teachers continually seek to embody in their practice. They are rallying points that clarify what the profession expects its members to get better at.

TABLE 5: The PRP and teacher accountability (percentages)

We were interested in the validity of teaching standards developed for the PRP. Hattie (1996) and Dwyer (1994) deal with this subject comprehensively. Our particular interest was in whether teachers considered the PRP standards helpful in the process of setting future PD goals and targets. That is, did teachers regard the PRP standards as a guide to what they could, or should, get better at? In the interviews, very few teachers said they looked at the PRP standards in this way. When asked where they go for ideas about how to get better at teaching their subject, none of them mentioned anything to do with the PRP standards or the performance management process. Instead, they said that their most substantial professional development comes from working with subject department colleagues at school, attending subject-specific network meetings of teachers across schools, and participating in the conferences and workshops conducted by their subject associations. These teachers considered that membership of professional communities across schools, as well as within schools, can provide a powerful source of PD, a view consistent with other research

findings (Little and McLaughlin, 1991; McLaughlin and Oberman, 1996).

Significantly, PRP teaching standards are tied more closely to state government and school charter priorities, not profession-wide standards of high quality teaching in particular curriculum areas defined by teachers' professional associations. As one principal and a LT3 said:

We have a three year master plan - a charter with fixed goals and priorities. Teachers must meet the state-wide dimensions of teaching within the structural framework of the charter, which is devised by the staff, parents and the kids. For example our goals are to improve the quality of teaching and learning, reduce bullying, and ensure the introduction of successful sport. The PRP is tied to management, to the school charter. (P/2)

The LT3s in this school help teachers prepare for the annual review.

LTs make teachers aware of what the Department's initiatives are - and what counts as evidence. My role (as an LT) is to be a mentor and help them improve toward those objectives. (LT3/1)

For example, the first criterion for annual review under "Content of teaching and learning" states that teachers should "demonstrate basic knowledge of areas of the Curriculum and Standards Framework and/or the Victorian Certificate of Education" (High School Diploma subjects).

Under the criterion, "Teaching Practice", teachers are required to "plan activities and present curriculum content in accordance with the

Course Advice (written by state education department officers) relevant to their classes."

Generally, Table 6 supports the interview findings. Interestingly, over fifty percent of teachers, and higher proportions of leading teachers and principals, agreed that the PRP standards gave teachers a clear idea of what they should get better at. When pressed, on this point, however, they indicated they were referring to how they should align their efforts with the school's charter and government policy. For example:

The purpose of the PRP is to draw teaching standards closer to school directions and government policy.

The promotion standards are mainly about implementing Department initiatives and leading and managing. (LT3/4)

Another critical feature of valid standards is their capacity to discriminate levels of performance. As evident in Table 6, a clear majority of teachers doubted the capacity of the PRP standards to distinguish highly from less accomplished teachers in their subject area. They were also sceptical about the ability of the PRP standards to discriminate levels of performance for leading teachers for the purpose of annual bonuses.

TABLE 6: The validity of PRP standards (percentages)

The validity of performance assessments in the PRP

Career advancement in professional communities is characterised not only by high and rigorous standards, but also by credible processes of performance assessment to determine who has reached those standards.

Within the PRP, teachers are evaluated for a range of purposes:

selection (or appointment), probation, accountability to school management, salary increments, promotion, endorsement and bonuses. These involve serious decisions with long term consequences. The rock on which any career structure and staff management system depends is the validity and reliability of its performance assessment. It is often said that what gets evaluated is what gets valued.

Did the PRP show that it valued highly accomplished teaching by investing in the development of valid and reliable methods for assessing teacher performance? In short, no. Principals were provided with brief guidelines and left with a task for which they were given little time or training.

Considerable research has been conducted on teacher evaluation (e.g. Millman and Darling-Hammond, 1990). The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1988) has developed a set of standards, the Personnel Evaluation Standards, to assess systems for evaluating teachers. We could find no evidence that the developers of the PRP ensured that the program met the Committee's standards before being launched, or even considered them. No attempt was made to trial the assessments and test their psychometric properties.

Table 7 lists some questions we asked teachers and principals about the validity of assessments in the PRP. Eighty percent of principals and fifty percent of teachers and leading teachers thought the PRP had introduced more valid methods of teacher assessment than

TABLE 7: The validity of teacher assessments in the PRP (percentages)

previously existed. However, nearly half the principals (44%) and 70% of the teachers in our survey did not believe that promotion to leading teacher was based on a rigorous evaluation of teaching practice. When the question (93) narrowed to the quality of teaching within specific subject areas, nearly 70% of leading teachers and principals did not think evaluation for promotion was rigorous. Overall, this is not a ringing endorsement.

Table 7 also shows that teachers and leading teachers were more likely than principals to agree that assessing teachers is a complex task that

the PRP avoided rather than faced up to. They were also more amenable to the idea that one way to increase the validity and usefulness of reviews and assessments might be to use teachers with the same subject matter expertise from other schools or professional associations.

CLOSING COMMENTS

The Professional Recognition Program was only in its first year of implementation when data for this study was gathered, so the findings have to be treated with caution. The PRP is a multi-faceted program and this paper has not considered all its features. Nevertheless the data point to certain outcomes so far from the PRP that call for a re-examination of the program's aims, procedures and assumptions.

The evidence gathered for this paper indicates that the Professional Recognition Program is not producing conditions conducive to high quality teaching in high schools. This raises questions about whether the particular form of management structures introduced under Schools of the Future will be compatible with the development of professional community, a necessary condition in efforts to improve the quality of teaching. Along with recent studies (Peterson et al., 1996, Newman and Associates, 1996), this study shows that radically restructuring school management can make little difference to teaching. The life of teaching goes on - the dailiness of teaching - it has to - and reforms such as school self-management and the PRP can seem irrelevant or peripheral to

teachers.

This study enables us to step back and assess the overall effect of the PRP career structure on the quality of teaching and things that matter to the quality of teaching. What is the career structure doing, and what is it not doing? Most teachers consider that the PRP has not had a positive effect on the quality of their teaching. They believe it has simply added to their workload and forced them to give less attention to their core work of teaching. As one of them said, the "PRP means recognition for what you do outside the classroom, not teaching".

Most teachers and principals do not consider the PRP is supporting teamwork in schools. Nor do they feel it recognises or values the professional knowledge and skills of teachers, as teachers. Generally, teachers do not believe the PRP provides strong incentives to meet high standards of teaching. To them the career structure says in effect, "We do not believe there is much for you to get better at after about ten years or teaching." If the aim is to encourage teachers to focus on improving the core business of teaching - reviewing their work, supporting each other's learning, ensuring they use best practices on behalf of students - then the career structure should give incentives for those behaviours.

There is increasing recognition that re-invention of teacher pay systems is a pre-condition for the 're-culturing' of schools as professional communities. Following Lawler (1990), Mohrman et al.

(1996), we would argue that if schools are to move toward the kind of high-involvement, high quality, professionally accountable organisations they will need to be in the future, then teachers need stronger incentives and recognition for practitioner knowledge, skill and leadership. For this to happen, pay systems need to reward not only advances in management skills, but also increasing depth and breadth knowledge and skills in core teaching practice. Advances in all three are of value to schools. Unlike competitive job ladder schemes, knowledge and skills-based pay systems provide all teachers with incentives to enhance their professional development.

This suggests the need to provide teachers, who reach the top of the incremental scale under a structure such the PRP, with three options: developing high quality teaching in their curriculum field; broadening their teaching into new fields; and increasing their skills in school management.

Fullan (1995, p. 1) argues that "there is one absolutely necessary . . . condition for reform to work, namely, the substantial broadening of teacher leadership until it embodies the majority of teachers in a given school, a given state, a given profession." What does this mean for the way career structures are to be conceived? It seems to imply a broadening conception of teachers' work with experience, but not career paths which only lead teachers out of teaching. There is a real dilemma here for those working on better career structures for teachers. Our understanding of good leadership is that it spawns multiple leaders and

forms of leadership behaviour from people within the organisation. This is not happening under the PRP. The PRP equates leadership with positional authority. Leadership in the PRP has been confined to the newly created management teams that leading teachers have been co-opted to join, with uncomfortable feelings of distance from former colleagues. The PRP strengthens control, breeds compliance, and undermines teacher commitment. An important issue emerges here. How can career structures encourage the kind of teacher leadership that is needed for accountable, innovative and collaborative professional communities without turning teacher-leaders into overworked people perceived by teachers to have gone over to management?

If work redesign drives a wedge between teachers who want mainly to teach, and those who have moved into managerial roles, questions arise about the sources of educational leadership and the most effective methods for control, motivation and professional learning. We repeatedly heard from teachers and from principals and assistant principals themselves, that senior managers in Schools of the Future had become increasingly remote from curriculum and teaching issues in their schools. Their role in educational leadership had diminished. The PRP experience, then, raises questions about the appropriate balance between managerial and professional forms of control and authority in shaping teachers' work.

Good managers are, of course, essential to the building of professional community. But we should not focus on management mechanisms alone if we

aim to build professional community. Elsewhere (Ingvarson and Chadbourne, 1997) we argue that the development of professional community within schools depends on the development of teaching as a profession and a standards-driven professional development system (Ingvarson, forthcoming). It would seem there is little chance of building a strong professional community within a school if those efforts are undermined by weak quality assurance mechanisms at the wider professional level; for example, when a state government allows poorly qualified or inadequately prepared teachers to gain employment.

Similarly, it will be difficult to build a professional community if the career structure always gives higher status to administrative positions over evidence of quality practice and teacher leadership, as occurs with the PRP. Quality assurance mechanisms within a school depend therefore on the strength of quality assurance mechanisms at the level of state or national professional bodies.

This study indicates that the PRP places more responsibility on principals for assessing teacher performance than they have the time or the expertise to fulfil. The trend toward local school management has many desirable features but there must be serious concerns about the intention to base evaluations of teachers for professional recognition solely within the individual workplace. The individual school will rarely be able to provide the expertise, the independence or the resources sufficient to mount valid, high stakes performance assessment

procedures alone. There are dangers at present that school administrators, unwittingly, may base assessments of teaching on idiosyncratic interpretations of the generic teaching standards that have been provided from the centre.

To where can schools turn if they want to act responsibly in making valid assessments of advanced teaching performance? The NBPTS idea of professional certification provides a model worth learning from. The NBPTS system of external professional assessment provides the kind of credible, expert and independent evaluation that schools can call upon in making defensible high-stakes decisions about career advancement. Certification by a professional body could, for example, be made a pre-requisite for promotion by employers thereby reducing the work of school-based selection panels but enhancing the validity of their final decisions. Professional certification also provides a guarantee of some degree of comparability across schools about the meaning of career designations such as 'leading teacher'.

During the early days of devolution, educational reformers seemed to place priority on the school as the fundamental unit of change; they seemed to pin their hopes for a breakthrough, in the 'productivity of student learning', on school development rather than teacher development. The introduction of a professional recognition program could be seen as a welcome acceptance of the need to redress this imbalance. If professional recognition programs are to be effective, however, they must go beyond being an integral part of schools of the

future; they must also become an integral part of the most powerful strategy for reaching Australia's educational goals, namely, the recruiting, developing, supporting and rewarding of excellent teachers.

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