
Award Restructuring: A Catalyst In The Evolution Of Teacher Professionalism

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This chapter examines award restructuring through a consideration of teacher professionalism. Professionalism is a central thread in award restructuring, sometimes as a distinctive presence, sometimes hidden. My argument in this chapter is that:

1. Professionalism is disputed terrain between teachers and their employers. In Australia, teachers have pressed for teacher professionalism through their unions by working with and against school authorities' administrative strategies and claims of managerial prerogative. Teachers and their unions have constructed an effective but limited teacher professionalism through this work.
2. Award restructuring provided an industrial framework for developing industrial and professional issues which are, in any case, overlapping and integrated.
3. This framework and the ensuing debates revealed the limited nature of teacher professionalism and showed up the critical features and relationships which must be developed to create a more comprehensive teacher professionalism in Australia.

In developing this argument I have reflected on my experience before, during and after the period of award restructuring when I worked as a teacher union official, then in the secretariat of the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning, and finally as a freelance researcher—still working on issues somehow associated with award restructuring. I have organised the chapter into four major sections. The first part discusses the history of teacher professionalism in Australia and the key role played by teacher unions in the pursuit of individual teachers' entitlements and rights at work (industrial issues) and the collective entitlements, rights and responsibilities of teachers as a group in relation to their work of educating students (professional issues). In the next section I discuss the development and character of award restructuring in education, and show that central issues were contentious matters of teachers' work and teacher professionalism which articulated with other educational debates. It meant that the award restructuring negotiations always threatened to burst the industrial framework into much wider agendas of educational reform. Ultimately these widening debates were harnessed in a new negotiating framework, the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning (NPQTL). The development and major work of these negotiations is discussed in the third part of the chapter. Finally, I consider the challenges that remain to be tackled in the aftermath of teacher award restructuring.

The professional and industrial roles of teacher unions

For a decade from the early 1980s I worked as a teacher union research officer, first with the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association, then from 1988 to 1991 with the Australian Teachers Federation/Union (now Australian Education Union).

Within the teacher unions research officers tend to have responsibility for 'professional' issues—matters of education policy, professional development and teacher education, curriculum and assessment, pedagogy, school and system organisation and funding, and so on. It is the industrial officers who have responsibility for wages and conditions cases before industrial tribunals (most of these cases involve matters which are, to a greater or lesser extent, professional as well as industrial), and for the associated negotiations. There is, of course, much overlap and sharing of responsibilities between research and industrial officers, and either or both might do work in a range of other areas such as wider

economic, social or political issues. Even so, the respective roles of research and industrial officers, reinforced by different committees and structures for policy development and implementation, in part reflect an artificial split between the 'industrial' and the 'professional' within the teacher unions and in the wider community. This split influenced the way different issues were taken up (or neglected) during and after the award restructuring process. The split between cultures, structures and personnel involved in industrial and professional matters was even more pronounced in some of the major school authorities.

Teacher unions, since their origins over a century ago, have seen both the industrial and the professional as their responsibilities. At times the industrial or the professional has been given greater emphasis, some activities have involved the clear integration of the industrial and the professional, and at other times the two have been separated when they could have been integrated. Union officials and members have at times been ambivalent about either the industrial or professional roles of the unions.

Some instances in teacher union history illustrate this. A precursor of the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU), the Queensland National Teachers Association, like some other early associations, was established for the 'mutual improvement' of its members, and 'rules bound each member to prepare and read a paper on some matter associated with their work' (Spaull & Sullivan, 1989, p. 12). The president of another early organisation, the Queensland Public School Teachers Association, claimed that it 'has confined its business to simply one point, namely that of salary', though it was also active in seeking the formal recognition of the body as the representative of its members, and later advocated that 'schooling should be governed by a board to which teachers would be elected by the whole teaching body', and took up the issues of 'wandering pupils' and inspection (Spaull & Sullivan 1989, pp. 17, 23-24). Neither of those organisations persisted. However, the issues with which they were concerned—both professional and industrial—were on the agenda of the more successful associations which followed and which finally combined to become the Queensland Teachers Union in 1889. At the first QTU conference the major issue (other than the rules for the formation of the organisation) was the clearly professional matter of the school syllabus, and other issues considered included the rights and further professional education of pupil teachers, compulsory education, corporal punishment, and payment for teachers' wives who taught sewing (Spaull & Sullivan 1989, p. 48).

Professional issues can pit employed professionals against their employers, or they can unite them with their employers. At some times the parties can be in conflict over a particular issue, at other times they may be in concert over the same issue. In schooling such patterns of conflict or consensus can differ between school authorities (government and non-government). The Australian federal system in which the States have constitutional responsibility for schooling is another compounding factor: the Commonwealth can take a position which differs from some or all school authorities. This complexity is apparent with the Australian Teaching Council, a matter discussed further below.

The teacher unions have put substantial resources into working on major professional matters without conflict with employers. These have included the professional development activities of seminars, conferences and journal articles concerned with educational issues (especially pedagogy, curriculum and assessment) which have always been a feature of the unions' work. During most periods and in most systems the unions have been recognised by school authorities as the organisations representing the expert views of teachers on professional matters. Therefore union representatives have been active members of system level ad hoc and standing committees and statutory authorities, and bodies such as school councils and other management and advisory structures at the school level. The major focus of the work of the Australian Teachers Federation from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s was its participation in the Commonwealth Schools Commission. Often such activities involved work with parent organisations, and sometimes student organisations and other stakeholders such as ethnic and indigenous community organisations. Multi-partite collaborative activities concerned with industry policy, work organisation, professional education and development, and participation in workplace decision making, are traditional teacher union responsibilities. In other words, key features of the wider post-*Australia Reconstructed* award restructuring agenda were already part of the everyday work of the teacher unions well before the late 1980s.

For Australian teacher unions major conflicts with school authorities have been over management prerogatives, especially control over the nature and standard of teachers' work (inspection, appraisal, and schemes such as 'payment by results'), and qualifications for practice ('control of entry' and registration). These issues are deeply 'professional' in that they involve the assertion of professional autonomy towards the end of improving the quality of education. Grievances with inspection and 'payment by results' were major factors in the formation of Australian teacher unions (Spaull & Hince 1986, p. 19). In his

biography of Frank Tate, who played a role in the establishment of the State School Teachers' Union of Victoria in the mid-1880s (and later became an inspector, then Victorian Director General of Education), R.J.W. Selleck commented that:

Payment by results helped the Department to accustom its employees to its ways. It degraded the teacher in his own eyes and squashed any nascent professional pride by treating him as if he were unwilling to work unless enticed by a bribe. Conceived in mistrust, the system bred mistrust. (Selleck, 1982, p. 36)

At a teacher union meeting in 1892 Tate gave an address, 'Teaching, the noblest of professions, but the sorriest of trades', and said of 'payment by results' that such a system

which subordinates the teacher to the examiner—the higher to the lower—[will] bring about a mechanical routine work which is fatal to true education. (Selleck, 1982, p. 65)

Some of the most significant post-war teacher union campaigns similarly involved teacher unions asserting professional authority relative to their employers, the school authorities. The Professional Action Campaign of the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA), working with the Technical Teachers Association of Victoria (both now incorporated in the Victorian branch of the Australian Education Union), was carried out from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s. During that time the unions took control of entry to the secondary teaching profession with their own registration system, and ended the use of external inspection for any purpose. Similarly, the resolution of disputation over the employment of unqualified teachers in Queensland resulted, in 1968, in the inclusion of a registration function in the responsibilities of the proposed Queensland Board of Teacher Education (now Board of Teacher Registration) with its majority of teachers and other education professionals.

In these campaigns the grounds were essentially professional—a concern with teacher autonomy because of its connection with the quality of teachers' work and student learning. For instance, on control of entry the VSTA argued that:

One of the fundamental requirements for professional status is that the profession itself lays down the minimum qualifications for practice in the profession ... When it comes to the crunch (the Department) is more interested in putting bodies in front of classes than in respecting the rights of employees and students ... Until State secondary teachers through the VSTA took action after April 1, 1969 ... the effect on the status of teachers

of the Department's policies was bad enough. But for the kids in schools it was disastrous. Chaotic classes were the norm not the exception. Teachers were more concerned with survival in crisis conditions than they were with the formulation of suitable curricula for the individual needs of their students. It is noticeable that the freeing of the curriculum has gone hand in hand with the improvement in teachers' qualifications over the past few years. (VSTA 1974a, p. 3)

This and other campaigns on professional issues involved the traditional militant action of industrial disputation—strikes and refusals to work as directed.

Notwithstanding such 'professional militancy', employers, with the support of media and other interests, have appealed to teachers' sense of professionalism (or their desire to be recognised as professionals) to undermine teachers' conditions of work, their collective organisation through unions, their identification with the broader trade union movement, and their solidarity with the working class—Bessant and Spaully have called this the 'myth of teacher professionalism' (1972, p. 89). This has been exemplified recently in Victoria where the Minister, Don Haywood, claimed on the day of a State-wide teachers' strike, that the 'true professionals' among the teaching service are those who do not take industrial action against staffing cuts and school closures (Bluett, 1995, p. 16).

Most of the industrial issues with which the teacher unions have been concerned have also been professional, to a greater or lesser extent. In fact the distinction between the industrial and the professional is often hard to sustain. The unions have argued that matters such as entitlements to in-service professional development, class sizes and relief from face-to-face teaching are directly related to the quality of education students receive. Similarly, deployment and staffing issues such as transfer policy, limited term contracts, incentives for hard-to-staff locations are related to the quality of schooling. Even improved salaries have been campaigned for in terms of attracting and retaining excellent teachers. These issues have involved increases in school funding, and here the unions have had unexpected allies such as an *Australian Financial Review* editorialist:

Like it or not, the nation needs to find the funds and the energy if it hopes to give its children even the ghost of a chance of competing in an educated, numerate and literate world next century. (*Australian Financial Review* 1990, p. 14)

While teacher unions have often struggled against management prerogatives in the name of 'professionalism', and have taken militant action on traditional industrial issues, until the mid-1980s they have often been ambivalent about a wider union identity. The first president of the QUT asserted that 'there was no taint to be seen as a trade union', but others saw the organisation as 'not a part of any movement in the nature of labour versus capital' (Spaully & Sullivan 1989, p. 48). This ambivalence remained a strong feature of some of the Australian teacher unions until the mid-1980s. The Australian Teachers Federation had been affiliated with the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Officers (ACSPA) since 1962. In 1979 ACSPA merged with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). The ATF had supported the amalgamation, and in 1978 the ATF determined to join the ACTU. This decision was so strongly opposed by the ATF affiliates in South Australia and Tasmania, the South Australian Institute of Teachers (SAIT) and the Tasmanian Teachers Federation (TTF), that they disaffiliated from the ATF for several years. (The New South Wales Teachers Federation had been affiliated with the ACTU since 1942, the Technical Teachers Union of Victoria since 1976.) The Independent Teachers Federation of Australia (now the Independent Education Union) affiliated with the ACTU in the mid-1980s.

The award-restructuring period was one of greater integration of the teacher unions into the wider trade union movement as other unions took up education and training issues, and also appreciated the membership strength of the teacher unions. (The other large white collar public sector unions also increased their influence and status within the union movement as the culture of the ACTU changed as an aftermath of the incorporation into the ACTU of ACSPA.)

Most other unions had maintained a narrower 'industrial' mandate until the early 1980s when the Accord between the ACTU and the ALP put industry policy rather tentatively on the agenda. In the late 1980s, award restructuring and related developments effectively brought in the matters of work organisation, skill development and utilisation, and participation in workplace decision making. These issues which are outside the narrow confines of what is traditionally considered 'industrial' have no general name in the way in which they are for teacher unions (and other unions of professionals) considered 'professional issues'. This matter of terminology, and the ideological and political tensions between 'unionism' and 'professionalism', have made it difficult to come to grips with how much of what was new for many unions was in fact not so for the teacher unions; how much of the teacher unions'

apparent unresponsiveness to award restructuring and other recent developments was because they had long taken up some of the central issues.

In summary, professional issues had long been a matter of concern to teacher unions, and had often been the basis of dispute between teacher unions and school authorities. Award restructuring gave a new emphasis to such issues and provided a framework for their consideration and implementation. In this process some issues became visible, others remained off the agenda. The teacher unions did respond to the award restructuring agenda in ways which suited their situation at the time, and which addressed matters of importance to them. The opening up of the Commonwealth industrial arena to teachers provided both a need and an opportunity. The developments since the late 1980s are still unfolding, and some very interesting and interconnected issues remain:

- the professional responsibilities of teacher unions;
- the role of teachers and their unions in education research, and teacher education and professional development;
- the relationships between practising teachers and education academics;
- the determination of the nature of teachers' work from the classroom to the system and national levels;
- the relationships between teachers (and their unions) and the school authorities which are the employers of teachers and which have formal responsibility for schooling;
- the role of the teacher unions in the wider union movement, and their consequent relationship with the Commonwealth Government arising out of the Accord between the ACTU and the government.

To understand the developments around award restructuring in the wider union movement, we need to begin with the 1983 Accord between the ACTU and the ALP.

The framework of award restructuring

Award restructuring was a pivotal element in a profound reorientation of the mainstream union movement and industrial relations in Australia. At a general level that reorientation was to bring unions into general relationship of collaboration, rather than conflict, with employers to improve national economic wealth through improvements in the competitiveness of industries and the productivity of labour. These

improvements were intended to occur without generally disadvantaging workers. The overarching framework has been the consensual *Statement of Accord by the Australian Labor Party and the Australian Council of Trade Unions Regarding Economic Policy* ('Accord', ALP/ACTU, 1983), which has been renegotiated seven times since 1983, and continues to play a central role.

The Accord was initiated as a key part of a strategy to overcome the stagflation (low economic growth combined with high inflation) of the time. It was in large part a strategy to restrain wages and to prevent any recurrence of the economically disruptive wages breakouts of the mid-1970s and 1981. The ideas behind the Accord began to come together in 1979 in discussions of the Australian Labor Advisory Committee (ALAC, a joint ALP-ACTU committee). The principles were fleshed out by Ralph Willis in a paper to the Labour Economists Conference later in 1979 (Willis, 1979). He saw an incomes policy as fundamental to the ability of a Labor Government to achieve a return to anything approaching full employment. Willis proposed improvements to the relative position of low and middle income earners, but did not mention industry policy or the social wage in his sixteen-page paper. The debate continued to be essentially a matter of wages. As part of the campaign in support of the prices and incomes policy proposal Bill Hayden gave an impassioned speech to the 1981 ACTU Congress. He argued that if the unions would not enter into an agreement which involved wage restraint 'the only alternative (for a future ALP government) will be the blunt, unselective economic tool of monetary and fiscal policy which bears so unfairly on those least able to bear it'. He argued for order and cooperation against the chaos and confrontation in industrial relations in the post-indexation period under Fraser. He argued for a 'fair and equitable' system of wage fixing against a system of market-based collective bargaining in which it was likely that 'wages will suffer vicious distortion, some may do well—those who belong to powerful and strategically placed unions. Most wage and salary earners may do very badly' (Preston, 1984, p. 12).

As debate around the 'prices and incomes policy' continued a number of left ACTU affiliates, led by the metals union, the Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights Union (now the Australian Manufacturing Union), supported the proposal and emphasised the potential for union involvement in economic planning, industry policy and gaining commitments on the social wage, if they entered into an agreement with the ALP.

In the early 1980s the teacher unions (both government and non-government) were looser federations than they are now. The federal bodies—the Australian Teachers Federation and the Independent Teachers Federation of Australia—did not have federal industrial registration, were relatively poorly resourced, and only the ATF was affiliated with the ACTU. Positions on political and industrial issues differed among the more than twenty separate unions, as did their places in the trade union movements in the various States and Territories and nationally. The teacher unions tended to be ambivalent about the Accord. They were sceptical of a strategy of ‘agreement’ where the clearest commitment was to wage and salary restraint, and other elements were vague and not part of the original agenda of the ALP. Some had a traditional left union concern with ‘collaboration’ with governments or employers. Others thought that the general notion of negotiation and agreement between the union movement and government had great potential, but considered weak and inappropriate the sections of the Accord concerned with the social wage and other matters of particular concern to public sector employees, to women, and related to social justice (Preston, 1984; 1991a). There was also some bemusement within the teacher unions in response to the view that the industry policy elements of the Accord were a dramatic change in direction for unions. The substance of the industry policy was primarily concerned with manufacturing industry, but its general framework for the role of unions was not new for teacher unions—since their inception they had seen such involvement in the development of their ‘industry’ (the education systems of the States and Territories and Australia as a whole) as a normal part of their work, as the unions’ roles on statutory bodies concerned with education such as the Commonwealth Schools Commission exemplified. This sense that what was being touted as a new development was what the teacher unions had always done—as the representative organisations of the professional interests and aspirations of teachers—would arise again when the teacher unions considered their response to the award restructuring agenda later in the decade.

The industry policy of the Accord promoted planned intervention in industry development by government, and consultation involving unions at industry, company and work place levels. The Accord statement was very critical of reliance on market forces, and supported financial regulation and maintaining industry protection (tariff) levels ‘in the midst of high unemployment’. Much of the substantive detail of the industry policy became a matter of contention between the parties to the Accord in the mid-1980s as the Commonwealth Government

implemented a general policy of deregulation, dismantling of protection and promotion of the mechanisms of the competitive market. The unions were making little headway in ‘macro-level’ industry policy.

Australia Reconstructed and the setting for award restructuring

It was in this context that in 1986 the tripartite Trade Development Council (TDC) sponsored a Mission to Western Europe by representatives of the ACTU and the TDC. The Minister for Trade at the time was John Dawkins. He had been opposition education spokesperson before Labor came to power, and was to become Minister for Employment, Education and Training in the following year—he was one of the leading modernisers and rationalisers of the Labor governments of the 1980s and early 1990s, and played a major role in the bringing together of education and economic policy.

The outcome of the mission, *Australia Reconstructed* (ACTU/TDC, 1987), reasserted and supported macro-level industry policy, but it marked a shift to a focus on micro-level issues of skill development and utilisation, work organisation, and a ‘productive culture’—all as elements of an integrated, consensus-based strategy.

Some of the positions outlined in *Australia Reconstructed* were part of a wider international move towards ‘micro-economic reform’, most influentially articulated in the 1987 OECD report, *Structural Adjustment and Economic Performance* (OECD, 1987). Significant elements of this wider micro-economic reform agenda, such as the privatisation of the public sector and significant areas of deregulation, were opposed by the trade union movement and were not part of the *Australia Reconstructed* program. However, other elements were strongly supported, especially those relating to improvements in skill formation, recognition and utilisation, work reorganisation, and new career paths based on skill development and utilisation. The key difference between the approaches of *Australia Reconstructed* and *Structural Adjustment* was the Australian document’s central commitment to ‘consensus-based’ processes, involving collaboration between unions, employers and governments at all levels. In this way it widened the original Accord agenda of consensus between unions and the Commonwealth Government in the fields of national wage setting and areas of specific Commonwealth responsibility to more explicitly involve employers, and, more generally, to evoke some deep cultural changes in the way work and industrial relations were conceived and practiced. The matters taken up in *Australia*

Reconstructed were considered within a tripartite, consensus framework of industry and trade policy based on 'advanced forms of industrial democracy' (ACTU/TDC, 1987, p. xiii) and 'strategic unionism' which required high levels of union research and training 'to ensure that members are active and informed and that unions can effectively participate in tripartite forums and national policy debates' (p. xiii).

The term 'award restructuring' was not in the document itself, but there was reference to the recently introduced 'two-tier' wages system. Its first tier provided a common wage increase to all workers, while it recommended that the second tier, based on the 'restructuring and efficiency principle', 'should encourage a productive and efficient society, by providing incentive for training and skill enhancement...' (p. 55).

Teacher unionists noted that *Australia Reconstructed* indicated an attitudinal shift in the ACTU, with education becoming a key policy area. While they welcomed the high priority given to education, there were concerns that teachers and relevant community organisations (such as parents or Aboriginal representatives) may be locked out of tripartite forums making decisions about education, and that the narrowly vocational aspects of education and training may be promoted at the expense of general education and a socially critical approach. In response to the wages discussion the concern was that teacher unions, along with other public sector unions, might fare badly in a system based on productivity because of the difficulties in measuring or recognising productivity in public sector social services such as education. The debate about productivity in education and its measurement would continue over the following years.

Essentially *Australia Reconstructed*, like the Accord, was primarily concerned with industries and industrial relations needs that were not those of the teacher unions or their members. Because of this, and because they saw themselves already involved in the industry, work place and skill formation issues, the teacher unions tended at first not to take up the deeper cultural change which was implicit in *Australia Reconstructed*. There were other aspects which the teacher unions could pick up on more readily, and there were implications which did affect them. The pattern was the same for award restructuring.

Australia Reconstructed, and the developing views of the trade union movement and the Commonwealth Government, were not the only major influences on the initiation and early development of award restructuring. Not surprisingly, employers were also developing strategies to respond to changing times and to take developments in directions they favoured. The most influential of the employer organisations at this

time was the Business Council of Australia. Their objectives included the weakening of unions and a reorientation of the industrial relations system to an enterprise focus (Business Council of Australia, 1987; Ewer et al, 1991, pp. 38-9).

The teacher unions were well aware of the difficulties in any major change in industrial relations, and they were well aware of the inherent differences between themselves and school authorities (as employers) on matters involving cost and management prerogatives. These differences were played out in the development and implementation of award restructuring and related aspects of the work and role of the teaching profession.

Award restructuring involved a transition from a concern with 'macro-industrial' to 'micro-industrial' policy; from concern with industry-wide policies to improve productivity and competitiveness to company-level and workplace policies and practices. There were, however, major developments in the structure of Australian unionism which were related to award restructuring. The general move was from craft (or occupation-based) unions to larger industry unions. The end of craft unionism was necessary for effective multi-skilling and new career paths in many industries, while the development of large industry unions was the alternative to the employers organisations' proposals for small enterprise-based organisations. The teacher unions were part of this movement, with amalgamations and widening of membership criteria to include non-teaching staff in schools and some other categories of workers in the education industry, though initial plans for one big education industry union (including all categories of workers in pre-school/childcare, schools, vocational and further education and higher education in the public and private sectors) have not eventuated (Robson 1990).

A more national approach to schooling and teachers' industrial relations

Award restructuring for teachers was shaped not only by the wider award restructuring industrial agenda, but also by developments in the mid to late 1980s in Commonwealth-State relations in schooling and industrial relations—a more 'national' approach to schooling developed, and teachers gained access to the Commonwealth industrial relations arena. Without these two developments award restructuring and associated developments may have been very different for teachers.

The development of a more national approach to schooling, and the closer integration at a policy level between schooling and the economy, began in 1987. In that year John Dawkins replaced Susan Ryan as Commonwealth Minister; the Commonwealth department's name was changed to 'Department of Employment, Education and Training'; and the Commonwealth Schools, TAFE, and Tertiary Education Commissions were abolished, to be replaced by the National Board for Employment, Education and Training (NBEET), with its four Councils—Employment and Skills Formation, Schools, Higher Education, and Research (and the later added Australian International Education Foundation Council and the Australian Language and Literacy Council).

These moves were consistent with the *Australia Reconstructed* agenda of better integrating education and the economy—the commissions had been made up of education industry insiders, while NBEET gave a major role to stakeholders outside the education industry, especially representatives from private industry. The changes also signalled a move towards the general tripartite model, with the legislation specifying membership of the Board in only three categories: two to have 'expertise or experience in matters relating to trade unions' (not specifically education industry unions), two to have 'expertise or experience in matters relating to business or industry', and at least seven to have 'expertise or experience in matters relating to education, training, science or technology' (Wiltshire, 1994, p. 183).

In May 1988 Dawkins released a schools policy document, *Strengthening Australia's Schools* (Dawkins, 1988). That document outlined the Commonwealth's positions in a number of areas which became central elements in the development of a more 'national' approach to schooling:

- a common set of national goals and purposes
- a common curriculum framework
- a common approach to assessment
- strategies to enhance the mobility of teachers between the States and Territories, including portability of entitlements.

A 'national' approach is one which involves a high level of co-ordination, consistency and coherence among the States and Territories, and where decisions are made on a collective basis involving all the States and Territories (and non-government school authorities where appropriate) and the Commonwealth. In deciding to initiate such an approach the Commonwealth was seeking to shift its strategy for changing schools

away from running its own programs with little consideration of the policies and practices of the systems—as had been the general practice with Schools Commission programs.

The States and Territories were slow to come to grips with the implications of such a national approach, but it was generally welcomed by the teacher unions. The wider public and the media (and probably many in the Commonwealth government) also had difficulty grasping the implications and meaning of a national approach to schooling. The issues were often explained in terms of the problems of the children of military personnel who frequently move from State to State and have to cope with changed requirements for handwriting and with differences in the ordering of topics in primary mathematics.

Strengthening Australia's Schools did not give a great deal of detailed attention to issues concerned with the quality of teaching, but it did emphasise that 'the quality of teaching is central to the quality of our schools', and stated that there was a need to examine means of improving the initial and on-going training of teachers. The 'National Schools Strategy', which arose out of *Strengthening Australia's Schools*, incorporated national award restructuring for teachers—what became the National Negotiation on the Quality of Teaching.

In the late 1980s the Australian Teachers Union and the Independent Teachers Federation of Australia gained access to the Commonwealth industrial arena. Since the early decades of the century, teacher unions (with the exception of those in the ACT and NT) had worked within State level industrial systems—either the mainstream State industrial commissions (for example, NSW) or specialist tribunals for teachers (for example, government school teachers in Victoria). Those States with lower salaries or poorer conditions, and where there were particularly antagonistic relationships with school authorities, may have looked wistfully at the possibilities of national wages and conditions, but the most powerful unions were generally satisfied with their local system and the resultant outcomes. For example, the NSW Teachers Federation tended to give greater priority to salaries and the quality of physical facilities, while the Victorian unions tended to give priority to higher levels of staffing, and the outcomes of industrial procedures reflected these priorities. Such positions were generally consistent with the unions' different perspectives on matters such as curriculum and school-level decision making.

In 1983, the federal industrial arena opened up to the teaching profession, following the High Court decision that 'industrial dispute' meant essentially any dispute between employers and employees (Preston,

1983). In January 1984 the ATF conference made a decision to form a separate organisation, the Australian Teachers Union, and to seek registration with the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. The matter was complex, involving internal political and administrative complexities related to gaining agreement among various ATF affiliates as to the nature of the ATU, as well as struggles with other agencies over registration.

In 1987 the ATU began to develop a national industrial presence with the handing down of a federal award for NSW lecturers (jointly with the then Federation of College Academics), and, in the following year, the preparation of claims for portability of entitlements between school authorities, and the transfer from the academic unions to the ATU of the award coverage for teachers undertaking supervision of teacher education students.

Perhaps more importantly for award restructuring than these particular cases, the federal industrial registration of the ATU and the Independent Teachers Federation of Australia gave them status as significant industrial parties. It also gave them a relationship with the ACTU which greatly facilitated their leadership roles in developing a unified and consistent approach to the award restructuring claims for salaries and career structures among their State and Territory branches.

Teachers' award restructuring

For teacher unions the award restructuring and associated agenda covered a range of issues. This included the simplification of awards through seeking greater national consistency in salaries and conditions—especially the 'benchmark' salary levels and portability of entitlements (such as accrued leave) between systems. It also saw the development of new career paths by the creation of Advanced Skills Teacher positions as promotion routes, which recognise and reward good teaching and advanced skill development, and the elimination of barriers such as those which prevented teachers with less than four years of training from having access to the top of incremental scales and eligibility to apply for promotion.

The promotion of industry efficiency was to be achieved in many different ways in the different school systems. These included changes in staffing practices and conditions to assist effective staffing of hard-to-staff schools, changes in duties and deployment of teachers and other staff in schools, changes in funding formulas for different types of

schools. There were discussions about fundamental changes to the organisation of teachers' work, of schools, and of systems to improve learning outcomes, but these tended not to make a great deal of progress in the award restructuring discussions.

For the unions, of course, a major aspect of the award restructuring process was the achievement of reasonable salary increases for most teachers.

There was much hope for the potential of award restructuring for teachers. At a Schools Council seminar on teacher quality and career development held in July 1989, Denise Bradley, then academic director of the South Australian College of Advanced Education, concluded her address:

Award restructuring provides the finest opportunity there has yet been for those of us who care about maintaining and improving the quality of teachers, of teaching and of education, to act for productive change. It is an unparalleled opportunity to reshape the pattern of a teacher's career from initial training to retirement in ways that could remove historical patterns of discrimination against women, raise the status of classroom teachers, provide structured opportunities for continuing professional development and allow divergent patterns of career progression. So many of the problems which affect teacher morale and community perceptions of teachers could be tackled and resolved during the award restructuring process that it is incumbent on everyone to recognise that they have a responsibility to get it right in the broadest way. Narrow sectional or self-interests can't be allowed to triumph. Award restructuring must lead to real improvements in the quality of education for students in schools. (Bradley, 1989, p. 16)

Award restructuring appeared to be an opportunity to grapple with a diverse range of issues, some of which were of long standing. It did provide an opportunity for a more penetrating focus, but in reality too much was expected of what was in a strict sense a limited process—awards were to be restructured over a limited period of time; once that had been done the 'award restructuring' process itself was complete. Much of what was put on the agenda required much more than a change in awards—most teacher awards were quite limited in scope. The major changes sought were in complex institutional practices and cultures which were embedded in the professional rather than the industrial traditions of the teacher unions. It is therefore not surprising that, once the strictly award-related matters of the implementation of the new salary scales, the AST positions and elimination of barriers had been dealt with, an apparent impasse was reached in the formal negotiations

over award restructuring. The matters were then handed on to processes more in keeping with the professional traditions of the unions—the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning and associated activities.

The issues which came on to the award restructuring agenda for teachers had some very complex origins, had been debated, sometimes tested, often left to languish in the 'too hard basket'. How some of the issues developed before, during and after the period of award restructuring will now be looked at.

New career paths

The most distinctive feature of teachers' award restructuring was the creation of the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) promotion positions. These did not have their origins in the wider award restructuring notion of 'new career paths'. Rather, their origins go back to about 1984. The 'new career paths' notion in award restructuring provided the industrial impetus and framework for the concept to become concrete.

In 1984 the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Susan Ryan, had established the Quality of Education Review Committee, chaired by Peter Karmel. Its brief was to examine the effectiveness of Commonwealth involvement in primary and secondary education. The review reported in April 1985 (Karmel, 1985). It marked a shift from emphasis on 'quantity' and inputs to education (essentially understood as funding levels) to 'quality' and outcomes. Though the unions and others (for example, Boomer, 1985) objected to the crudeness of the dichotomies and insisted on the inherent connections between resources, quality and equality, the dichotomies were consistent with wider developments concerned with efficiency and effectiveness. The report of the review contained a chapter on teachers and teaching, which covered pre-service and in-service teacher education at some length, and also considered the matter of 'rewards and incentives'. It was noted that incentives in industrial awards were limited to dealing with hard-to-staff schools, and that seniority remained important in promotions decisions. The matter of 'improving the reward system for good teachers and offering incentives for better performance' was raised, and it was suggested that:

One measure for keeping good teachers in classrooms rather than seeking preferment by moving into administrative positions is the creation of special promotional positions ... [such as the 'master teacher' positions in the Commonwealth teaching service where] teachers who are assessed as

excellent classroom teachers and potential advisers to other teachers became eligible to apply for promotion ... and can obtain one promotion outside the usual promotional route. (Karmel, 1985, p. 123)

The creation of more such positions, perhaps with wider margins, was suggested, but the capacity of school systems to act on such limited proposals was also recognised (Karmel, 1985, p. 124).

In 1986 the Commonwealth Schools Commission initiated a major policy development project on teacher in-service education. The report, *Teachers Learning: Improving Australian Schools through Inservice Teacher Training and Development* (Boomer, 1988), sought to integrate teachers' career structures with professional development and the development of 'advanced skills'. The improvements in the teaching environment—class sizes and physical facilities—were noted, and contrasted with the relative decline in teachers' salaries:

Teaching shows every sign of being in poor shape to compete for its share of the most able of school graduates in the 1990s. There is a need to alter the structure of rewards within teaching to provide recognition and incentives for more highly skilled and more successful teaching performance ... The basic structure of rewards within teaching has not changed for a long time. There is a lack of formal recognition and tangible value placed on skilled and committed teaching practice. (Boomer, 1988, p. 54)

It was argued that:

The nation needs better outcomes from schooling. This must be achieved by a more highly skilled performance from the teaching profession and must be led by those teachers with the skills to do so.

Teaching needs to compete in a competitive labour market for its share of the most able young people.

New career paths need to be developed within teaching to retain highly skilled teachers in classrooms. Appropriate status and salary rewards are required.

New means of securing higher standards of teaching performance need to be developed.

The centrality of good teaching to educational outcomes needs to be acknowledged, encouraged and rewarded. (p. 55)

Thus the foundation was laid for what became the central element of award restructuring for Australian teachers—the Advanced Skills Teacher positions. *Teachers Learning* made no direct reference to award restructuring and related developments in the wider industrial relations context, but clearly it picked up on ideas current around the world.

As drafts of the report were being prepared, as well as after publication, the teacher unions debated the proposal for a new career path. The sticking points that emerged during 1988 were those that continued to be problematic in most jurisdictions as the proposal was being negotiated in the more formal industrial processes of award restructuring a couple of years later. These were the matters of appraisal (who was going to make the judgement about a teacher's eligibility for promotion and according to what criteria), and whether the promotion was to focus on individuals (the particular characteristics, experiences and qualifications of individuals, with no a priori limit to the number of teachers who might gain promotion) or positions (to create categories of new jobs in schools, thus limiting the number of teachers gaining promotion to the number of such positions created), or some compromise (quotas). This latter issue was common in various forms in other industries, where the alternatives could be characterised as promotion as a reward for *skill acquisition* or as an opportunity for higher levels of *skill utilisation*.

Restructuring of the teaching profession and its work

The other major aspect of award restructuring, and one which was not resolved during the industrial negotiations associated with award restructuring, was industry restructuring—more particularly, the restructuring of teachers' work and the teaching profession.

The Schools Council, established early in 1988, took up the quality of teaching agenda as a matter of priority. It set up a working party to examine certain issues associated with teacher quality, and, after consultations with interested bodies, to develop a draft paper concentrating on teachers' professional development and issues which had a national or Commonwealth focus. During the life of the working party the Schools Council directly considered the issues of award restructuring with a seminar on 'Teacher Quality and Career Development' held in Canberra in July 1989, the proceedings of which were published by NBEET (Schools Council, 1989b).

Robert Bluer, Counsellor to NBEET and former General Secretary of the Australian Teachers Federation, prepared a background paper for the seminar (Bluer, 1989). The paper began with a discussion of teacher education (especially in-service professional development), but its most important sections were about the implications for teaching of the wider developments in award restructuring. In the context of consideration of the Advanced Skills Teacher positions, he discussed the importance of teacher appraisal and the complexity of issues involved, concluding that 'appraisal mechanisms, to be successful, must be negotiated between the parties, and not imposed by management fiat' and 'the regular evaluation and professional development of all teachers...should be placed fairly and squarely in a school and industry improvement context' (p. 63). Bluer argued that:

The effectiveness of teaching is as much a function of industry and enterprise (school) organisation as is the limited notion of teacher quality. Therefore, it is not sufficient ... for award restructuring to deliver better careers and rewards for teachers without improving the context (the industry) at the same time ... Improved careers for teachers is just one element in any industry improvement plan. (p. 58)

The notion of an 'industry improvement plan' was in principle attractive to the unions—but what did it mean in concrete terms? There were many relatively small details about teachers' work and the operation of schools and systems which could be put on the table for negotiation and change. But what were the big elements of a 'restructure'?

The restructuring of school systems

Government school education systems had engaged in major restructurings through the 1980s, some of which would continue to the present time, and there will be more to come. These restructurings tended to involve forms of devolution and decentralisation (either on a participative model as the Victorian initiatives of the mid-1980s, or a market model as those in the same State a decade later) combined with a tighter recentralisation of overall control and accountability (for a discussion of developments in all the States and Territories, some overseas experiences, and theoretical analyses of the issues, see Martin et al, 1994). These restructurings were occurring outside the industrial arena, on the initiative of school authorities, with some or no consultation with teacher unions and parent organisations. Some involved only the reorganisation of the administrative structure of systems, and had little direct impact

on teachers' work within schools on a day-to-day basis. Others had a much greater impact, especially on the nature of the work of principals, and on the culture and ethos of schools.

The 'industrial bounding' of award restructuring meant that these major developments tended not to be integrated into the award restructuring agenda because the overall organisation of school systems was not seen as an industrial issue (except where matters such as local employment of teachers are involved). But though it may not be a strictly industrial issue, system organisation was a matter of great concern to the teacher unions. The system restructurings were also ruled off the agenda in much of the debate around teaching quality and teachers' work because the work of the teaching profession tended to be understood as that carried out by individual teachers within the confines of classrooms.

This individual, rather than collective and strategic, orientation is consistent with the traditional industrial approach which is concerned with the entitlements of categories of individuals, rather than the collective work of a group—a whole profession. It is also consistent with the traditional school authority perspective of teachers as employees who should not encroach on management prerogatives regarding the organisation and management of schools and systems. While the teacher unions were criticising this narrow, individualistic view of teachers' work (for example, Preston, 1991b, p. 2), that criticism was not integrated into the overall approach of the unions at the time.

The restructuring of staffing and teachers' instructional work

With system restructuring off the award restructuring agenda, two major areas were considered. These were the structure of staffing, including the ratios of teaching to non-teaching staff and differentiation among teachers, and teachers' work in relation to student groupings.

In a widely discussed public lecture under the auspices of the State Board of Education of Victoria, Dean Ashenden (Ashenden, 1990) drew from the work of the former president of the American Federation of Teachers, Albert Shanker, and argued that there should be:

- a different division of educational labour—more differentiation among teachers, and a higher proportion of para-professional support staff; higher salaries for teachers, especially those in more senior positions (ASTs) though no overall change in costs as there would be a reduced proportion of teachers relative to lower paid non-teacher staff;
- thus a changed definition of teacher's work—less time 'lecturing students', and less time doing administrative work;

- thus a change in the labour process of schooling—both teachers and students doing less mechanical and routine work, and more creative, productive work. (p. 4-6)

Ashenden argued for a fundamental challenge to the 'core pedagogy of teacher-centred instruction', which would give students and teachers and other education workers 'a much more varied diet of learning groups and of learning activities' (p. 6).

The unions' responses to these ideas were mixed. They accepted that much more needed to be done in the area of pedagogy, the ways in which the work of teachers and students was organised, and the actual nature of that work. However, they did not see any clear or constructive direction in Ashenden's paper. They generally did not like the proposal for a higher level of hierarchy, specialisation and differentiation among teachers—on the grounds of equality among teachers and the possible detrimental effect on the quality of student learning, a view echoed by the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools in the USA (Meier & Schwarz 1995, pp. 27 and 36). The unions did not accept Shanker as an authority—the American Federation of Teachers was not highly regarded by the Australian unions and was in competition with the Australian unions' colleague union in the USA, the National Education Association. The Australian unions also felt that generally Australian schools at the time were well advanced relative to US schools on the issue of the labour process for students and teachers—seeing US schools as driven by the '4Ts of teacher talk, text and test'.

The unions were sceptical of the blanket proposal to decrease the ratios of teaching to other staff. They were well aware of the great differences between systems in such ratios—for example, in 1989 in government primary schools teaching staff as a proportion of all staff ranged from 88 per cent in Victoria to 77 per cent in Tasmania, and in non-government primary schools the range was from 87 per cent in NSW to 76 per cent in Western Australia, with similar ranges at the secondary level (Australian Education Council 1991, pp. 50-1). These differences were often related to quite complex differences in curriculum, pedagogy and the cultures of schools and systems which had developed over time. There appeared to be no comparative research on the differences in the way staff and students worked and in learning outcomes which could support Ashenden's proposals. There did not seem to be any point in suggesting that Tasmania—or even Victoria—decrease their proportions of teaching staff unless it was clear that it could make a cost-effective difference in learning outcomes.

On the matter of student groupings, the unions were in part bemused by the narrow focus on industrial awards and agreements which emerged. A century ago there had been debates about and changes in the way students were grouped, changing the labour processes of teachers, students and others. These different methods were related to resource levels, teachers' competence, and philosophies of education. The major methods were the 'individual system', where a teacher was responsible for a relatively small group, and gave each student in turn individual instruction while the rest of the students worked on their own, the 'monitorial' system in its several varieties where a teacher could be responsible for a very large group by instructing senior students—monitors—who then instruct groups of other students, and the 'pupil-teacher system' based on an apprenticeship model where a trainee teacher assists the teacher and may take some classes while receiving instruction from the teacher after school hours (Barcan, 1980, pp. 17, 34, 51 and 84). More recently—from the 1960s, later boosted by the 'innovations' programs of the Schools Commission in the 1970s—there had been some significant experiments in, and implementation of, 'open plan' schooling, team teaching, multi-age groupings, mini-schools, multi- and cross-disciplinary organisation of curriculum (and thus student groupings). The unions were aware of the major impact of the traditional discipline-based end of school credentials which inhibited substantial breaking down of the traditional student groupings and pedagogy—especially in secondary schools. There was therefore concern that changes to work organisation were being promoted—almost as panaceas to all that ailed schooling—without reference to curriculum and credentials.

The unions were also aware that formal industrial awards often had little influence over the organisation of teachers' work. Where there was clear specification of matters such as maximum class sizes and hours of work it had arisen out of a context where the unions had seen school authorities take easy administrative solutions to difficult staffing situations. For example, rather than seriously develop ways to improve the staffing of hard-to-staff schools, school authorities had simply increased the class sizes and teaching loads in those schools. As those schools were often already among the most educationally disadvantaged the unions' strategy of formalising conditions was clearly educationally beneficial in such situations. The unions were aware of the trade-off with flexibility, and some variations were allowed. In the mid-1980s the Australian Teachers Federation grappled with the dilemma of standards versus flexibility, as the matter of whether to specify desirable maximum or average class sizes was debated within the forums of the union. It was

believed that in an ideal world average class sizes (or overall student-teacher ratios) were the best general staffing mechanisms, but that in practice quality schooling for all students was best ensured by specifying maximum class sizes which could not be surreptitiously circumvented by employers having administrative or financial difficulties with staffing. The unions felt—based on their experience—that employers could not be trusted to put educational criteria ahead of administrative convenience. The issues paralleled those which concerned the VSTA during the control of entry campaign discussed earlier in this chapter.

The Schools Council's wide-ranging report, *Australia's Teachers: An Agenda for the Next Decade* (Schools Council, 1990), released late in 1990, grappled with many issues, including teachers' work organisation ('structuring the task' in the classroom—pp. 63-8). The ATU response (which I prepared after substantial input from ATU and affiliate officers) indicated the frustration of the union with the narrow focus on formal industrial agreements in the debate about the way the work of teachers was organised in schools. The following long excerpt includes some key passages from the Schools Council report, as well as the union's response. They distil some central positions in the debate.

The [Schools Council] paper is critical of the strong tradition of one teacher to a group of students. It is asserted that 'the real core problem confronting schools and administrators is the inflexibility produced by the terms in which industrial agreements or understandings are couched—an equation which will apply to all schools throughout a system regardless of their needs and configuration, an equation, it must be added, which faithfully and mathematically reflects the most common current form of school organisation'. This is an arguable assertion. It is claimed that 'simplistic perspectives' are adopted in industrial negotiations, and it is suggested that a way to improve structural flexibility in schools 'would be to abandon the use of definitions of class size maxima and base staff allocation on a pupil teacher ratio' (p. 67).

The 'strait-jacket' of supposed class size maxima in industrial agreements is referred to on a number of occasions throughout the paper. But such industrial agreements/understandings have not until recently been common, and even now often are not effective or do not exist (as the ATU National Survey results indicate). As this was raised several times during the development of the paper we may ask why industrial agreements are being scapegoated for creating a supposed strait-jacket, when the patterns of class groups arise more from administrative requirements/convenience (timetables, buildings, and teacher numbers); valid educational grounds such as stable student-teacher relationships and optimal individual attention; fairness of allocations of work among teachers; and perhaps tradition

and inertia. It may be constructive to consider the issues surrounding student groupings, but it is not constructive to start by scapegoating industrial agreements.

While inflexible class size maxima, where they exist, may be problematic (but perhaps at the moment a necessary way to protect teacher-student ratios), the real issue is to seriously investigate optimal student learning (student work) and how that is achieved—that should be the basis for considering organisational matters. Support for team teaching and other forms of collective, collegial work, and of appropriate flexibility in student groupings (p. 65) is welcome, and much is possible even under the more prescriptive agreements currently existing. The proposals for block grants to schools to determine all their own staffing (the 'radical option', pp. 68 and 75-8) are advanced without adequate consideration of the issues, and even if implemented such block grants may have little impact on the core patterns of student groupings. (Preston, 1991b, pp. 17-8)

The experience of the National Schools Project/Network generally supports the position taken by the ATU here—industrial agreements have little relevance to the sorts of changes in teachers' work which seem most appropriate to improving teaching and learning—to improving the productivity of schooling.

Work organisation, and some related aspects of industry restructuring, had been explicitly on the award restructuring agenda, and were not able to be dealt with through the industrial processes. The difficulty lay in large part in the complexity of coming to satisfactory resolutions—a complexity arising out of the many professional issues interweaved with the organisation of teachers' work, and they, too, were put on the agenda for consideration. These issues had their own histories, and were shaped and understood in the context of differing and developing notions of teacher professionalism which were interrelated with the wider award restructuring agenda.

The National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning

Many and complex issues were placed on the table—explicitly or implicitly—during the award restructuring negotiations. It is not surprising that initially little substantial progress was made beyond the traditional industrial matter of salaries—the 'benchmark' rates, the new AST positions, and removal of barriers for teachers with less than four-year qualifications.

With the particularly strong support of the ACTU and the Commonwealth, agreement was reached to form a three-year research and development project to take up the issues which could not be managed in the industrial arena. The award restructuring process was therefore a catalyst for more sustained consideration of matters of long-standing concern.

The National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning, which began early in 1991, had the tripartite structure of post-*Australia Reconstructed* industrial decision making. The parties were the government and non-government school authorities and teacher unions, the Commonwealth, and the ACTU. There was no place on the governing board for academics (though teacher education and related matters were a major part of the project's agenda), and there was no place for representatives of parent or community organisations.

An influential member of the governing board was Laurie Carmichael, the ACTU representative. He had been a key member of the 1986 mission to Western Europe, major drafter of *Australia Reconstructed*, and central architect of award restructuring through his work for the metals union and his influence within the ACTU. He firmly sought to keep the focus of the project on the matters relevant to award restructuring, and to maintain an adventurous, innovative approach. He had little time for what he saw as the carping of a 'socially critical' perspective, for undue caution or for vested interests. He was very critical of traditional academic approaches to learning and to research, strongly advocating experiential learning, action research, and the central involvement of the workers concerned (teachers) in decision making. He promoted the reorganisation of workplaces along the model of 'the systems work unit'—something taken up through the National Schools Network/Project (White, 1993).

Carmichael's vision was coherent and, in a way, refreshing. But it tended to drive a wedge between practising teachers (and their unions) and university-based teacher educators and researchers. At the time academics were poorly organised, defensive and vulnerable. In many institutions they were torn between the apparently opposing values of the traditional high status university activities on the one hand, and teaching, research and service in support of local school systems and the teachers working in them on the other (Preston, 1992). As Jim Walker, then the President of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, put it in a report to the NPQTL in 1993, 'There is a damaging amount of distancing, territoriality and even disrespect and hostility between potential partners in teacher education' (Walker, 1993, p. 7).

It was important for practising teachers, through their unions, to strongly assert their right to a major role in teacher education and research. In contrast to most other professions, the professional representation of practitioners (teachers) is through organisations (the unions) which do not include as members the university-based teachers of the profession and researchers in the field. This separation has been related to the ambivalence of teachers, their employers, and the general community to professionalism for teachers. It has supported an anti-intellectualism among teachers, a certain contempt for 'theory' and for their own professional education in higher education institutions. It has also militated against close connections and collaboration between academics in education faculties and the practice of school teaching, making both education research and teacher education less relevant to teaching and the work of schools than they might otherwise have been.

This matter of the involvement of practising teachers in matters traditionally seen as the province of university academics gradually evolved during and after the work of the NPQTL. As we shall see there were some false starts, but it now appears to be one of the most promising areas of fundamental change to come out of award restructuring. This is returned to in the final section.

The NPQTL working parties took up three central issues of the wider award restructuring agenda:

- *skill development*—the working party on Professional Preparation and Career Development which began with developmental work on initial and post-initial teacher education, and which then gave priority to developing what became the National Competency Framework for Beginning Teaching (this working party included academic representatives);
- *skill recognition*—the working party on National Professional Issues which began work on competency standards and carried through work on portability of conditions between States and systems/jurisdictions, options for registration, and from mid-1992 gave priority to the possible establishment of a national teaching council, which resulted in the Australian Teaching Council;
- *work organisation (skill utilisation)*—the working party on Work Organisation and Related Pedagogical Issues which gave priority to a school-based action research project, the National Schools Project, which became the National Schools Network.

The work of the NPQTL in these areas and the context in which it developed will be considered in turn.

Skill development – teacher education and competencies for teaching

During the late 1970s and early 1980s a number of States and the Commonwealth held major inquiries into teacher education (see Auchmuty, 1980). Colleges of advanced education and universities incorporated ideas from these investigations into their programs, but there was little action from governments. The Commonwealth was seeking the redirection of resources out of teacher education into areas such as technologies and business studies, and sought to prevent a general pattern of four-year pre-service teacher education. This position was taken largely on the grounds of cost, which ignored the fact that the three-year pre-service courses were part of a four-year 'initial' teacher education program on the 3 + experience + 1 model, in which the large majority of teachers recruited with a three-year qualification completed the fourth year. This misguided concern with cost and length distracted all parties until the late 1980s from concentrating on more substantial issues, such as the involvement of the teaching profession and school authorities in initial teacher education, and the nature of school experience as part of initial teacher education.

The Australian Education Council working party on teacher education, established in 1989 and chaired by Dr Fred Ebbeck, took the view that 'all initial teacher education programs [should] be conducted as a cooperative, tripartite activity involving higher education institutions, schools employers and teachers' (NBEET, 1990a, p. v). In places in the report (for example, p. 43) the partnership is just to be between universities and school authorities—a similar position was taken in the influential 1992 review of teacher education at the University of Melbourne (Maling & Taylor, 1992, pp. 30-1, 46, 62).

The AEC working party also outlined a preferred model of initial teacher education which involved a three-year degree which would provide a basic licence to teach, followed immediately by a two-year program where the 'associate teacher' would be employed part-time in schools, accept a teaching load, receive support from the school and the university, and also carry out half-time university studies. The model itself was widely rejected, but the principle of more extended school-based activities, and a more substantial role for school personnel in initial teacher education programs, was more acceptable. However, the issues were complex and aspects controversial. There was not a coherent conceptual or organisational framework for effective partnerships between the various parties—especially between the practising teachers and

the university academics. In addition, the school authorities were little concerned about initial teacher education in a period of low levels of recruitment and an oversupply of graduates. However, some successful agreements involving extended school-based activities of students in fourth year BEd programs who had completed a three-year BTeach were negotiated between the three parties (university, teacher union, and school authority) in NSW around 1990.

The Australian Education Council at its December 1990 meeting noted the Ebbeck report, the report of the Discipline Review of Teacher Education in Mathematics and Science (Speedy, 1989), the Schools Council's *Teacher Quality: An Issues Paper* (Schools Council, 1989a), and NBEET's *The Shape of Teacher Education: Some Proposals* (NBEET, 1990b), and adopted a lengthy resolution which acknowledged

the need for immediate and sustained improvement in the quality of entrants to and graduates from teacher education programs within the current level of resources available for pre-service teacher education, together with greater efficiency in teacher education programs and recognition arrangements for teacher education qualifications...

After listing ten broad areas and strategies, the AEC 'agreed that the major forum of further work in this area will be the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning' (AEC, 1990).

The NPQTL working party on Professional Preparation and Career Development thus had a mandate from the State, Territory and Commonwealth governments for sustained work on teacher education.

The NPQTL organised two workshops on teacher education—one on initial teacher education and one on in-service. They were intended to develop 'principles' for initial and in-service teacher education. The initial teacher education workshop provided teacher educators with the opportunity to discuss with their peers and NPQTL participants the principles and practices of their programs. The emphasis tended to be on the curriculum of initial teacher education programs, rather than on collaborative relationships in the development and implementation of programs. Some work was commissioned and documents collected on matters such as professional development schools in the USA. The exercises were very tentative, and no firm conclusions or recommendations for further action were reached.

The working party then put its energy into the development of a set of competencies for teaching, taking over the area which had been begun by the working party on National Professional Issues.

In Australia a competencies approach, was playing a central role in award restructuring in non-professional occupations in the late 1980s, though at the time it was an approach with some strong behaviourist characteristics. A competencies approach had been developing since the mid-1980s because a framework based on competency standards was seen to provide a simple and comprehensive way of understanding, organising, and integrating the three key areas of award restructuring: skill development, recognition and utilisation. However, there was an understandable distrust of competencies among teacher educators and teachers and their unions after the experiences in the USA and elsewhere with competency-based teacher education (CBTE) in the 1960s and 1970s.

Competencies were not part of the award restructuring agenda for teachers, and were not seriously contemplated until the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning was well under way in 1991. In 1991, the heads of government in Special Premiers Conferences supported commonality or mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the States and Territories—to facilitate the mobility of professionals and greater consistency between the various jurisdictions. Competency standards were considered as a possible mechanism. The Special Premiers Conferences also determined that competency-based standards should be developed for all professions by the end of 1992. Though this decision was not formally enforced, it gave great impetus to the development of a set of competencies by the NPQTL.

The actual task of developing a set of competencies was initiated in 1991 with the commissioning of a number of papers on the possibilities of competencies for teaching. Early in 1992 the NPQTL agreed on a broad position that any competencies development should be based on a 'holistic' or integrated model, taking full account of the complexity and value-laden nature of teaching. Later in 1992 three different consortiums were commissioned to carry out developmental work on teaching standards. The outcomes of these projects were refined and combined, and the resulting draft competency framework was the basis of a consultative 'validation' process. In 1994 and 1995 investigations were carried out into the application of the competency framework to initial teacher education, induction, and in-service teacher education. These were done under the auspices of a working party which carried on the structure of the NPQTL working party. The framework is now available to be used by any interested party (NPQTL, 1996).

Skill recognition—the development of the Australian Teaching Council

The working party on National Professional Issues began with a focus on the national issues of 'mutual recognition of qualifications, portability of entitlements and the development of a national teaching profession' (NPQTL, 1992, p. 5). After the initial work on competencies and the commissioning of work on barriers to portability of superannuation entitlements between jurisdictions, the working party's major concern became the matter of a 'national professional body'. This issue had a long and complex history, as we shall see, but through the work of the NPQTL the Australian Teaching Council was formed—something which occurred without the formal endorsement of the NPQTL itself.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the issue of a 'national professional body' for the teaching profession emerged. At the April 1989 meeting of the Australian Education Council a decision was made to establish a working party to investigate and advise on (inter alia) 'national recognition of teacher education qualifications' (NBEET, 1990a, p. 1).

This working party on teacher education, chaired by Dr Fred Ebbeck and involving personnel from the Schools and Higher Education Councils of NBEET, DEET, universities and school authorities, recommended:

That approval in principle be given to the establishment of a voluntary system of national teacher registration through a body representative of State/Territory teacher registration agencies which wish to participate and that the AEC appoint a task force to prepare a detailed proposal for implementation of the scheme. (Recommendation 11, NBEET, 1990a, p.vii)

The discussion of this matter in the executive summary of the report noted that:

The report also draws attention to the desirability of the teaching profession itself taking the initiative to establish some standard-setting agency as in medicine, accountancy, law. (NBEET, 1990a, p. iv)

The AEC referred the report of the working party to the National Board of Employment, Education and Training. The National Board took the matter up in its report, *The Shape of Teacher Education: Some Proposals* (NBEET, 1990b), under the heading 'A National Professional Body' where it was suggested that the issues are 'broader than registration', and recommended that:

The teaching profession should establish a national professional body representative of the profession as a whole, with its main concerns being quality of training, standards of professional conduct, professional development and the recognition and registration of qualifications. (p. 12)

During 1990 the idea was promoted that the Australian College of Education (ACE), and not the teacher unions, should be recognised as the national professional body. Phil Meade, an ACE council member who supported this position, quoted Gregor Ramsay, then chair of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training, saying in interview:

I'd like to begin by saying that one of the problems is that we don't have a clearly identified profession of either teaching or education. There's no overarching professional body as for example in the medical profession, or the legal profession, or the engineering profession, and therefore in some senses the profession itself has got to take some steps to make its identification much clearer than it's been until now. Indeed, in many respects, the professional role has been taken by default in a relatively unhappy arrangement by the union movement. (Meade, 1990, p. 33)

The teacher unions were aware of other anti-union currents. Early drafts of *The Shape of Teacher Education* had stated that there was a view that the unions were inappropriate organisations for the professional representation of teachers. Reference to Dame Mary Warnock's 1985 Dimpleby Lecture had been circulated among some teacher union officials. There she advocated the formation of a General Teaching Council for teachers in England and Wales on the grounds, inter alia, that:

teachers would gradually cease to be predominantly unionised, and instead would become professionals comparable to doctors or lawyers. (Demaine, 1988, pp. 256-7)

(That the British and Australian Medical Associations are registered trade unions seems to have been ignored in much of the debate.)

Two themes were apparent at the time—and continue to some extent: a confusion between the appropriate characteristics of representative organisations for professions (such as professional associations and unions) and standards bodies (such as registration boards) (Preston, 1995); and a debate about the appropriateness of the teacher unions as professional representative organisations.

During 1991 the Schools Council of the National Board continued working on the matter, producing the discussion paper, *A National Professional Body for Teachers* (Schools Council, 1991), and working collaboratively with the NPQTL later in 1991 and into 1992.

Decisions of the Special Premiers Conferences in 1991 supported commonality or mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the States and Territories to facilitate the mobility of professionals and greater consistency between the various jurisdictions. This resulted in an apparent imperative for a system of national registration for teachers (otherwise the lowest common denominator would prevail). National registration required a national mechanism, and thus the proposal for a 'national professional body' or 'national teaching council' gained momentum.

To support its work, in 1991 the NPQTL investigated overseas developments such as the establishment in the United States of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the operation of the General Teaching Council in Scotland. A discussion paper was prepared (McRae, 1992), and a conference of stakeholders was held in March 1992. The communique from the conference noted that (inter alia):

This Conference has agreed that the option which can best benefit both the profession and community is the development of a proposal to establish a National (Australian) Teaching Council.

Through the rest of 1992 and early 1993 drafts of a constitution and other documents were prepared, various consultations were held, and the matter was discussed within the forums of the NPQTL.

At the 4 June 1993 meeting of the executive committee of the NPQTL it was agreed that all the parties did not support the implementation of the teaching council proposal after the 'employers' caucus' (the school authorities) indicated that they were not in a position to recommend adoption of the proposal. The Commonwealth, working with the unions and consulting with various other parties, then took the initiative, and on 15 June 1993 the Australian Teaching Council was incorporated as an association in the ACT.

The ATC is quite properly structured as a 'standards body', with stakeholders other than teachers on its governing body, and its overriding purposes are related to enhancing and ensuring the standards of teaching for the benefit of students and the wider community. The board of the ATC has a majority of practising teachers from the government and non-government sectors in each State and Territory who are elected by registered 'members' of the council. Other board members are

nominated by a range of organisations including teacher unions, other teacher organisations such as subject associations, school authorities, and organisations representing teacher educators, parents and other stakeholders in schooling. This composition means that it cannot represent teachers (in the way the unions can with their governing bodies elected from the membership)—it is not a 'representative organisation' (Preston, 1995).

Not all the school authorities have taken up their seats on the governing board of the ATC. While the reasons for non-involvement differ, their lack of commitment does indicate a mix of States' rights parochialism (a lack of interest in a national standards body even if there is support for local mechanisms) and assertions of employer prerogative over matters such as the qualifications necessary for recruitment. Without employer—especially State government—commitment to national registration and similar initiatives, implementation will be difficult. Without a clear individual benefit such as registration (or some similar accreditation), the ATC cannot expect to 'recruit' more than a very small minority of teachers, and its most effective means for doing so appears to be to claim to represent teachers on professional matters—and thus be in competition with the teacher unions. Currently the ATC is playing an important role in relation to teaching standards. It provides a forum for the major stakeholders to come together and develop common understandings and positions.

The ATC had some complex and contradictory origins, and its effective functions, funding base and long-term viability are still unclear. It has the potential to play a major role as the national standards body for the teaching profession, with registration its core function, but carrying out wider activities. A most important function may be facilitating substantial collaboration between practising teachers and university-based teacher educators and researchers—at the levels of both peak organisations and practitioners.

Work organisation—the National Schools Project

The working party on Work Organisation and Related Pedagogical Issues took up the central unfinished business of teachers' award restructuring: the effects on learning outcomes of different ways of organising teachers' work, the divisions of work between teaching and non-teaching staff, participation in decision making, and administrative and organisational barriers and constraints which impede learning outcomes.

To investigate these issues in a way which, it was hoped, would result in enduring changes to schools, the working party established the National Schools Project (NSP) late in 1991. It was an action research project which initially involved about seventy schools across all States and sectors. To support the NSP several papers were commissioned and an international seminar, involving the OECD, was held late in 1992 to share information and experiences on changes to teachers' work organisation. By the end of the NSP more than 170 schools had become involved.

Like the other initiatives of the NPQTL, the NSP grew out of and was informed by a wide range of developments in addition to developments in award restructuring. The review of the NSP (Connors, 1993) highlighted significant contextual developments, including devolution of decision making in government sector systems, the collapse of the youth labour market and the recent history of school reform initiatives. The report noted:

There are, for example, similarities between the NSP and other State school improvement programs, such as the School Improvement Program (Victoria); and Managing Change (WA), which were designed to foster school-based reform in a climate of growing devolution of powers to schools. The emphasis within the NSP on collaborative and participative decision making as a pre-condition for reform is similar to that found within the Commonwealth's longstanding Disadvantaged Schools and Country Areas Programs. (p. 4)

An important aspect of the NSP was the agreement to suspend rules and regulations affecting work organisation in participating schools, with such suspension quarantined to those schools. While there were different views regarding the importance of this, it allowed necessary flexibility if and when such rules or regulations were a hindrance. By taking that factor out of the equation, the focus shifted to other constraints and barriers—those of tradition, culture, resources, and difficult professional judgements in demanding situations. The NSP provided a secure environment in which to innovate. The context of a national project, with co-ordinators at system level, and with structured evaluation, made the commitment of energy to such innovation worthwhile for teachers.

The NSP began in a context of fragile relationships between the unions and employers (school authorities). Its purpose was to transform a climate lacking in fundamental trust to one of co-operation and

mutuality—a more fruitful partnership between the school authorities and the unions. In this and other ways it drew from the consensus-based approach of award restructuring arising from *Australia Reconstructed*.

University-based education researchers were involved in the project as 'critical friends' and as participants in the evaluation processes. While this was seen as an important element in ensuring that the evaluations and other research elements were generally done well, the notion of 'partnerships' between teachers and academics was not central to the NSP. The academics tended to be diffident in their involvement, and, while systemic change was expected of schools, (understandably) there was not a similar expectation of Education Faculties. That issue was to be taken up much later.

At the end of the NPQTL the NSP developed into the National Schools Network (NSN), operating under the same principles. By 1995 more than 300 schools were part of the network, and the NSN became linked with a number of other activities, including the work of the ATC and other initiatives arising out of award restructuring and the professional and industrial roles of the teacher unions.

Beyond award restructuring

Award restructuring and the work of the NPQTL forced the pace on many issues, developing a better integration of the professional and the industrial for teachers, and in general expanding the scope of teacher professionalism. Significant matters which remain unresolved or which will continue to determine how issues connected with award restructuring are played out include:

- the ways in which teachers and other stakeholders in schooling are represented and involved in decision making;
- the employer-employee relationships between teachers (and their unions) and school authorities in a context of greater school-level management in a federal school structure;
- the interrelationships between practising teachers and university-based teacher educators and education researchers.

The representation of the teaching profession

While greater teacher professionalism appears to be a common objective, there remain differences in what this means and how it occurs. Agreement that professionalism implies the collective representation of the profession does not mean there is agreement on the organisations to be

representative of teachers. While the teacher unions' profiles are high, the ATC is still seen to stake a claim at representation in competition with the unions, and there are school authorities, such as the Victorian government school authority, which resolutely give the teacher unions (and the ATC) little recognition.

The Labor Commonwealth Government gave a high level of recognition to the teacher unions, to some extent bypassing the school authorities in its direct relationship. This relationship was strengthened by the industrial role of the teacher unions as affiliates of the ACTU. The 1992 Accord between the ACTU and the Commonwealth Government included a commitment to the development of an agreement between the Commonwealth and the teacher unions on some central matters of schools policy. This led to the *Agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the Teaching Profession through their Teacher Unions Providing for an Accord to Advance the Quality of Teaching and Learning* (Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Education Union & Independent Education Union, 1993) which details objectives and implementation strategies in areas of national priority for schools—literacy, the middle years, post-compulsory education, the education of girls, and professional development. As the former Minister points out in his introductory comments, the 'Accord constitutes a very tangible recognition of the fundamental role that teachers must play in the continued development of the profession', and he closes by commending the teacher unions for their 'foresight and vision in joining with the Commonwealth in this important and very necessary agreement' (p. 1).

Sharan Burrow, AEU president, notes that 'as a national framework for managing educational change and development, the Accord represents a responsible approach to both professional and industrial issues' (p. 2), and Lynne Rolley, IEU federal secretary, notes that the Accord 'reflects the commitment of the Commonwealth and the national education unions to the continued development of a collaborative culture within the education community', and that the Accord legitimates the proper role of the teaching profession as partners in the national education and training reform agenda (p. 3).

The Commonwealth's nurturing of the collective nature of the teaching profession, as represented through the unions, may play a significant part in maintaining a high quality, coherent schooling system in the context of greater devolution and elimination of school authority professional support structures for teachers. However, as the Teaching Accord is an agreement arising out of the industrial arena of relationships between peak unions and government, there is no place for parent and

other community organisations, or for the non-union representative organisations (such as the Australian Council of Deans of Education, or the Australian Teacher Education Association, or the Australian Association for Research in Education) and other stakeholders. There will therefore need to be vigilance and commitment to ensure appropriate participation of all interested parties. A change of Commonwealth Government alters all this.

The employer-employee relationship endures

The teacher unions went into the NPQTL with a higher level of national organisation than did the school authorities. Much of the work of the project was concerned with the development of a teacher professionalism which encompassed professional involvement in or control over decisions about teachers' work, education, definitions of competency and recognition of qualifications. In other words, encroachments on management prerogatives in a number of key areas. While some school authorities are supportive of the widening role for teachers, others are reluctant or even hostile on some issues. Some school authorities were less than fully committed to the NPQTL, and as a group they were disunited on matters such as the ATC to the end. However, all school authorities retain their trump card as the employers of teachers and the owners/controllers of schools.

The professionalisation of teachers can be easily undermined by the firm assertion of management prerogative, especially the strengthening of the role of principals as managers with strong hierarchical authority in relation to classroom teachers within a devolved system of schooling. This is now occurring in Victoria where collegiality based on the professional judgements of teachers (including principals) working together has, in key areas, been replaced by the individual judgements of principals. It is hard for teachers to maintain and develop their professional confidence, competence and commitment in such demoralising and vulnerable circumstances. A strong professional identity which transcends the particular workplace and employment situation can be sustaining for teachers in such difficult circumstances, as well as enhancing the professionalism and effectiveness of teachers in more supportive environments. But such a professional identity needs substantive collective activity, and a respected public profile. The developments arising out of teachers' award restructuring provide some solid support for such activity and public recognition.

Award restructuring, and, more specifically, the work of the NPQTL, integrated the professional and industrial work of the teacher unions. While there was some jostling for position between the officers and members from the industrial or the research/professional areas of union activity, overall the period led to a greater understanding and appreciation of the issues and work in the respective areas. However, the day-to-day demands of the industrial employer-employee relationships, especially where the school authorities are not part of or particularly committed to the ongoing professional activities and initiatives, put pressure on unions to return to old patterns of demarcation between the industrial and the professional. In a situation of funding cuts and crude displays of management prerogative by school authorities, seeing 'professionalism' as a myth is an understandable response by many teachers.

Teacher professionalism – incorporating professional education and research

As the formation of the NPQTL was being negotiated, the Australian Teachers Union formalised the concept of 'democratic professionalism', described in several 1991 policy statements as follows:

School teaching is a professional activity, requiring initiative and a degree of autonomy for practitioners, which is informed by a substantial and ever-developing base of knowledge, understanding and commitment, and which is directed to the needs of students, their parents and the wider community. The ATU believes that a democratic form of professionalism is appropriate. Democratic professionalism does not seek to mystify professional work, nor to unreasonably restrict access to that work; it facilitates the participation in decision making by students, parents and others, and seeks to develop a broader understanding in the community of education and how it operates. As professionals, teachers must be responsible and accountable for that which is under their control, both individually and collectively through their unions. (Australian Teachers Union, 1991, pp. 1-2)

This notion of professionalism emphasises a collaborative, cooperative approach to industry development, skill development, and work organisation. Such collaboration involves other teachers (teaching recognised as a collective, not an individual, endeavour), and stakeholders other than teachers. However, this description of (ideal) teacher professionalism does not deal with practitioners' roles in research and teacher education in universities—thus the roles of practitioners and academics are separate and not integrated.

The NPQTL tentatively began the process of integration of the roles of practitioner, educator of the profession and researcher, in the context of an understanding of the importance of university-based professional education and research for professions such as teaching.

The teacher unions are the appropriate organisations to represent teachers professionally as well as industrially, yet university staff concerned with teacher education and education research are outside the unions. This separation between practitioners and academics in the field presents some significant challenges for teaching.

At the time of writing, a Commonwealth Government-sponsored forum, the 'Chalk Circle', is being established. The forum's central objective is to promote dialogue between stakeholders on issues related to initial teacher education: developing stronger partnerships between the teaching profession and teacher educators, teacher supply and demand, the role of competency standards, teacher registration, content in courses, professional development for teacher educators, and promotion of good practice in initial teacher education. The proposed outcome includes recommendations for the Commonwealth, universities, the profession, school authorities, and others. The forum is being chaired by the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE), administration is being carried out by the ATC, and other participants include school authorities, teacher unions, and the Commonwealth, among others.

The Chalk Circle did not arise directly out of award restructuring or the work of the NPQTL—but they provided the supportive context. Its immediate origins arise from separate representations to the Commonwealth from the ACDE and the teacher unions for some sustained consideration of aspects of teacher education, involving stakeholders and developing agreement and commitment to the outcomes of the process. The commitment of the two relevant ministers (Simon Crean, Minister for Employment, Education and Training, and Ross Free, Minister for Schools and Vocational Education) reflects both the accepted authority of the unions and the ACDE, and a recognition that the reviews of teacher education over the past decade have generally foundered on the indifference (or hostility) of key stakeholders (the Commonwealth, universities, teachers, school authorities), or the failure to develop the cultural changes or administrative mechanisms necessary for the implementation of major recommendations which were positively received. This latter problem has been most apparent in the area of 'partnerships' between universities, the profession, and school authorities.

As the building of 'stronger partnerships between the teaching profession and teacher educators' is probably the most powerful and all-pervading objective of the forum, 'chalk circle' is an interesting metaphor. For most Australians for whom it has any resonance (other than as an evocative reminder of the chalk of the classroom) the reference would be to the chalk circle in Brecht's play, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Brecht, 1991). Two women contest the custody of a child, a judge draws a chalk circle, places the child in the circle, and says that custody will go to the woman who can pull the child to her side. In fact he awards custody to the woman who lets go and steps back for fear of hurting the child.

Perhaps the chalk circle is a metaphor for how some major issues have been played out. Practising teachers (and their unions) and education academics (university-based teacher educators and education researchers) have disputed custody of the child—the public definition and development of the teaching profession (including developing the official knowledge base through research and curriculum development in teacher education, and carrying out that professional education). They have tugged at the child, pulling it from one side to the other, sometimes one antagonist has let go, sometimes the judge of government or public opinion has made a temporary award. Others—school authorities, the Commonwealth, parents, the media—have reached for and tugged at the child. But there has been no satisfactory solution. The child (the public definition and development of the teaching profession) languished to a greater or lesser extent in this zero sum game. Too often practising teachers have been caught up in the demands of their everyday work and in their antagonism to (or awe of) academics, while academics have been too often preoccupied with the traditional academic values and trappings of the university, with their everyday work within the narrow confines of their disciplines, with their lack of a professional identification as teacher educators, and with their vague contempt for (or apologetic cringing to) practitioners. Other parties have been similarly preoccupied with other matters.

Now the parties are beginning to pay much more serious attention to the definition and development of the teaching profession. Academics have had the major formal role of teacher education and the development of the knowledge base of the profession through research—they have had official custody of the child, though they have neglected it. Practising teachers now want to play a greater part, and be recognised for doing so. Will they get it by appeal to the judge, claiming the incompetence of the academics, ending up with a burden they are not fully prepared for? If practising teachers claim sole custody of the child they are saying there

is no role for professional researchers and professional educators of the teaching profession—that the definition and development of the profession can be carried out by practitioners as part of their everyday practice. This is an extraordinary position for a profession. Yet it is the logic of the chalk circle model which has dominated so much thinking. It is a way of thinking which arises as an outcome of the development of teaching as a profession: its low social status as an occupation and as a field of teaching and research in universities; the complexity, uncertainty and lack of a 'scientific' component in its core knowledge base; the employed status of teachers and the institutional and systemic nature of school education and thus the joint responsibility held by school authorities and teachers for the quality of teachers' work; education academics' frequent lack of a clear professional identification; and the separate representative structures for practitioners and education academics.

To go 'beyond the chalk circle' requires development on a number of fronts, and some strong progress has begun to be made. Such progress needs continuing support to retain momentum and to be enduring.

Most important is the development of a general pattern of constructive and fundamental collaboration between practising teachers and academics. The Chalk Circle itself may give an impetus. There have been examples of such collaboration in the past. For example, work aimed at the 'elimination of sexism in schools' involved not only teachers and academics, but also parents and community activists. However, outside such areas there remained an influential and narrow view of 'teacher research' as action research for the individual purposes of the 'reflective practitioner'. There was no sustained way of incorporating the understandings developed into the formal 'knowledge base' and thus the teacher education curriculum, and no place for practitioners in research beyond the school level. Practitioners are often very critical of the work of university-based researchers in terms of its irrelevance to their work, and the lack of respect for the subjects of the research (such as students and teachers in schools) (Cook, 1994).

Currently there are a number of projects which are grappling with practitioner involvement in research, and with collaborative relationships between university and school staff for research and related activities. The National Schools Network, for instance, is doing much more than developing better understandings to improve the practice of teachers. It is also developing and testing better ways of carrying out research to consolidate the knowledge base of the teaching profession through a process of close collaboration between practising teachers and academics. The NSN is still working through ways of collaborating, and

it tends, understandably, to focus on research by practising teachers, with support from individual academics. So, while the project is integrated into the everyday work of participating schools, it does not make the same connections with the work of education faculties in universities: it breaks down the individualism of teachers' work, but does not do the same for academics' work.

A related project, which similarly, but more explicitly, involves academics, is the large three-year 'Innovative Links' National Professional Development Program project. The project involves academics from about half the Australian universities. The structure of the project involves 'round tables' of teachers from participating schools with 'academic associates'. Again, the work of the project is focused on change in schools, with professional development conceived within an action research framework. Again, the project is not generally integrated with the ongoing work of the university—except in as far as the individual academics involved can make it so. But this might change.

The challenge arising out of these projects is for these collaborative approaches to be expanded in scope to cover wider areas of research, and to be more fully integrated into the work of education faculties—to play a part in transforming that work. The patterns of collaboration in these projects could strengthen the collaboration already developing in initial teacher education in relation to the practicum and, in a small number of programs, all phases of course development, implementation and review. The personal relationships, competencies and attitudinal change developed during successful collaborative activities cumulatively bring about cultural and institutional transformation—but a critical level of activity must be maintained, especially in the early stages.

At this time the collaboration which is the basis of these initiatives is not supported by the core funding, administrative mechanisms or the priorities of either school systems or universities. It relies on the commitment and enthusiasm of individual teachers and schools, and individual academics (and, sometimes, faculties)—and of course the current financial and other support of the particular projects and programs (usually funded through the Schools and Curriculum Division of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training). An enduring infrastructure for collaboration is needed. Such an infrastructure incorporates more than financial and administrative mechanisms, though they are essential. It needs a cultural change (which is already occurring to a greater or lesser extent) and a coherent conceptual basis for collaboration which encompasses the basic purposes of university professional education and education research, and the professional

roles of practitioners and education academics. Such a conceptual framework would place effective collaboration at the centre. An integrated competencies approach may facilitate this (Preston & Kennedy, 1995), but work in that area is at an early stage, and other approaches may be effective. (As noted earlier in this chapter, a competencies approach has played a key integrating role in the award restructuring agenda of non-professional occupations—linking as it does the definition, development, utilisation and recognition of skills in a framework of industrial democracy.)

Concluding comments

The direct impact of award restructuring may have been disappointing to those who expected an immediate radical transformation. Award restructuring may have limited some of the issues that were taken up and the ways they were dealt with, and its application to teaching was often confused and confusing. But in retrospect it is hard to imagine that the fundamental changes that seem to be emerging would have occurred without award restructuring—what it limited in breadth it made up for in providing the opportunity for deeper penetration into the foundations of some key policies and practices.

The broad framework of award restructuring, developed in the context of the Accord and *Australia Reconstructed*, continues to shape the cutting edge developments. The central tenets of that framework—fundamental scrutiny of the industry and the work carried out in it; integration of diverse strategies for review, development and change; informed and collaborative participation of stakeholders and thus their joint ownership of and control over review and development—underlie developments which have the potential for a radical transformation of the teaching profession and teaching and learning in schools. It will take some time yet before the full impact of award restructuring can be assessed, but given a broad interpretation, that impact is likely to be profound.

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