

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Higher bar: Professional standards not sufficient for teacher quality

**26 July 2016:** Professional standards for teaching and the rigorous accreditation of training courses are necessary but not sufficient to ensure quality teachers, according to a review by Professor Nan Bahr and Suzanne Mellor released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

In the report, *Building quality in teaching and teacher education*, Professor Bahr argues that the personal attributes that enable an effective teacher to develop into a high-quality teacher cannot be developed through a competency-based standards system alone.

Professor Bahr, of Griffith University and Suzanne Mellor of ACER, conclude that while standards are important and can assure competency, and perhaps even effectiveness, this is a much lower bar for achievement than one set to ensure quality.

According to the report, accreditation as it is currently constructed only considers the competencies that teachers demonstrate rather than the personal attributes that have a positive impact on students' learning.

“Such an approach does not go far enough in providing insight into the key attributes that form quality in teaching,” Professor Bahr said.

“Where is the requirement to motivate, to lead learning, to build confidence, to inspire aspirations? Where is the requirement to show care and compassion, to develop mutual respect? Where is the sense of teacher identity and responsibility for student development, self-confidence or self-efficacy? These qualities are not so easy to measure and tick off a list, but they can be demonstrated.”

Additionally, the authors argue, it is the role of initial teacher education to target and develop these attributes.

ACER Chief Executive, Professor Geoff Masters AO, said that while there is merit in specifying capabilities and applying a standards-based teacher evaluation system, quality initial teacher education also needs to recognise the vital capacity that quality teachers have to win hearts and minds, and to establish positive relationships with students.

“Standards and an accreditation process do not, in and of themselves, assure the development of quality teachers,” Professor Masters said.

“The accreditation processes and requirements for graduates to demonstrate achievement of professional standards are necessary but not sufficient to ensure that those seeking accreditation are indeed quality teachers.”

The report also notes that beginning engineers, doctors, pilots or lawyers are inducted into a stratified and formal system of supervision and control, which effectively amounts to the provision of training wheels, and careful and direct monitoring of their actions with a requirement for sign-off by a supervisor for any key decision-making. The authors argue that this needs to be the case for the teaching profession, where assurance of quality, to date, has simply relied on evidence of compliance with professional standards statements and the accreditation processes embedded in them.

The Australian Education Review (AER) series is edited by ACER Senior Research Fellow Suzanne Mellor. AER number 61, *Building quality in teaching and teacher education* by Professor Nan Bahr and Suzanne Mellor, is available as a free download from the ACER website at <http://research.acer.edu.au/aer/15> More information on previous issues in the AER series is available at [www.acer.edu.au/aer](http://www.acer.edu.au/aer). Print copies can be purchased from ACER Press. Contact customer service on 1800 338 402 or via email on [sales@acer.edu.au](mailto:sales@acer.edu.au) More information on previous issues in the AER series is available at [www.acer.edu.au/aer](http://www.acer.edu.au/aer).

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