Somewhere Out There:

Regional Educators, Professional Learning and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Tanya Appleby

Bachelor of Education

Postgraduate Certificate in Religious Education

Master of Education

Department of Educational Studies

Faculty of Human Sciences

Macquarie University

9th October, 2017

SUMMARY

Establishing professional standards which reflect what teachers can do, and what they need to do, to maximise student achievement has long been associated with the educational reform agenda in Australia. The contextual setting of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) emerged from competency driven policies in the late 1980s and 1990s which attempted to standardise teacher practice. Professional competencies as they emerged during this time, continued to be developed by professional groups and government agencies to establish greater understanding of standardised practice. The period between 1990-2011 is characterised as a time of scrutiny as associations and government agencies continued to challenge the purpose and development of standards of teaching practice.

With the release of the 2011 *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, and January 1, 2018 set as the date when New South Wales teachers must engage with the *Standards*; many schools have begun the process of familiarisation. Given that all teachers are expected to apply the *Standards* to verify their professional accreditation, can the *Standards* mean the same thing to all teachers, irrespective of their context? This case study has investigated the ways regional teachers in New South Wales have engaged with the *Standards* as they work somewhere out there.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Tanya Appleby

9 October, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with much gratitude that I thank my supervisor Dr. Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan for her endless support, encouragement and wise advice. I am particularly grateful for her unlimited patience and willingness to communicate with me at all hours and in different places and spaces around the world. I also thank Dr. Norman McCulla for his final recommendations.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the regional teachers and country schools who agreed to participate in this study. I thank them for their willingness to share their narratives with me and for their generosity of spirit. Thank you for instilling the joy of learning while teaching somewhere out there.

DEDICATION

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my late Mother, Judith Avila Vilches who sadly passed away before I could complete this work. I know that she would have been so proud of me. I would also like to dedicate this work to my loving husband Ian, a man of remarkable compassion and courage, who is my constant companion and best friend.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

This study investigates and reports the ways regional teachers in New South Wales (NSW) have engaged with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). It is founded on the understanding that this national policy, makes explicit reference to what constitutes quality teaching in the twenty-first century school context. In realising this objective, the policy makes clear what teachers are expected to know, understand, and do to demonstrate achievement at different stages of their career. Underpinning the study is the premise that teachers require on-going professional learning to support the twenty-first century skills and understandings that are inherent in the policy document. To this extent, the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) offers educators a common framework that maps professional knowledge, practice and engagement that leads to nationally consistent accreditation.

Avalos (2011) draws connection between the role of professional learning and teacher capacity to transform their knowledge, skills, and understanding to improve learning outcomes for their students. This supports the notion that effective professional learning draws on a range of factors that contribute to attaining sustained teacher improvement. While there is no doubt about the value of professional learning in building teacher capacity, teachers of today, as Hargreaves (2000) states, are required to respond to a new kind of educational landscape that is much removed from the world in which they were educated. This new world

requires teachers to call on students to communicate, collaborate and learn in ways which reflect the changing globalised world around them. To respond to this changing world, and the needs of contemporary learners, teachers require a repertoire of strategies to meet the demands of the twenty-first century curriculum (Hargreaves, 2000).

To facilitate this agility in teaching, educators need a versatility that is characterised by adaptiveness, self-regulatory learning, and a breadth of practice to encompass broad skills and understandings related to the contemporary curriculum (Stevenson, Hedberg, O'Sullivan, & Howe, 2016). Schools and educational systems, therefore, are required to respond to the needs of contemporary learning by investing in professional learning. Investing in teachers to improve the learning outcomes of students is considered a national priority that is explored in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008). Developing a framework such as that of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011), (formerly known as the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* but for the purpose of brevity, will be known here as the *Standards*) presents the opportunity to investigate how regional teachers have engaged with them. Given that there already exists an abundance of literature on the concept of professionalism and teacher self-efficacy, examining the perceptions of one specific group of regional teachers, against a common conceptual framework, presents a lens into what Desimone (2009), constitutes as best practice to measure the effects of professional learning (p.192).

1.2.   Aims of the Study

The overarching research question was:

How and in what ways have regional teachers engaged with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011)?

To enable this, the study firstly aimed to explore the interactions of regional teachers with the *Standards* to investigate the nature of the relationship between professional learning, and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). The study also aimed to shed light on the role that professional learning plays in enhancing knowledge, skills and understanding to support teachers applying the *Standards* in the context of twenty-first century learning and teaching. Furthermore, the study also aimed to explore how the *Standards* were applied, and what they meant to teachers at different stages of their careers. Finally, the study aimed to give voice to educators who operate in regional schools, and identify their strengths and challenges as they have responded to national policy that is linked to their accreditation as professional educators.

1.2.1. Engaging with the Standards

The purpose of the study is to understand how and in what ways regional teachers have engaged with the *Standards*. To engage with the *Standards* implies an ability to understand the purpose of the *Standards* so that they can be applied to improve the capacity of teachers. To do so, engagement with the *Standards* infers an ability to understand the implied expectations of how the *Standards* are used in varied teaching contexts. Engagement with the *Standards* also suggests an ability to

understand what they mean and how they can be applied, to meet the needs of twenty-first century teaching and learning practice.

1.3. The Context of the Study

The analysis of data in the study is set within the context of five New South Wales (NSW) regional schools. The schools were made up of primary or secondary school sites or a composite of both. This case study investigation drew on the experiences of nine teachers of varying years of service from across the five sites. The teacher participants were teachers new to their careers with less than, or equal to, three years of teaching experience. These teachers were identified in the study as Early Career Teachers. The other teachers were experienced, having four or more years of teaching service. This secondary group of teachers were divided into two further groups. Experienced Teachers with no leadership roles and Experienced Teachers with leadership roles.

1.4. Preliminary Encounters with the Standards

The context of this investigation was set in the period between January and May, 2017. This period is before January 1, 2018 which marks the mandatory engagement period decreed by the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) when all NSW teachers are expected to embrace with the *Standards* for accreditation into the teaching profession.

This period before January 1, 2018 offered rich preliminary insights into the experiences of regional educators across three different stages of their career. A

benefit in undertaking an investigation at this time was that the study explored the early perceptions of regional teachers at the point of initial induction or early familiarity with the *Standards*. It also examined the experiences of teachers who have already commenced their process of accreditation. In addition, the study challenged the implicit assumption that the *Standards* can mean the same thing to all educators irrespective of their context.

1.5.   Exploration of Place

This investigation looked to a study of place, as described by Noone (2015), as locale that is rich in diversity and difference. It explored the tension that exists in the literature about how location is represented, and specifically, how much of the literature on situational context is often, according to Kalervo, Gulson and Symes (2007), and others such as Green, Noone and Nolan (2013), presented in a deficit discourse conforming to rural stereotypes. The study has also explored how the voices of regional teachers are expressed in terms of engaging with a common national policy that determines their professional accreditation. It ultimately challenges the assumption if one policy can mean the same thing to all teachers irrespective of their setting.

1.6.   The Approach to the Study

This small study has adopted a mixed-method case study approach, involving interview and survey to analyse qualitative and quantitative data. It employed interview elicited narrative responses to semi-structured questions that were framed in four key areas. Questions were included on:

1. access to, and engagement with, the *Standards*;

2. purpose of the *Standards* at a school and national level;

3. the role of professional learning in exploring twenty-first century skills and understandings that are inherent in the *Standards;* and

4. professional efficacy connected to the categorisation system in the *Standard*s.

The study also analysed quantitative and qualitative data in a survey delivered by *SurveyMonkey*. The questions in the survey focused on four key areas and included:

1. time allocated at a school level to induction or familiarisation with the *Standards;*

2. perceptions related to the purpose of the *Standards*;

3. perceptions related to the *Standards* with reference to teacher performance and capacity; and

4. perceptions of the strengths and challenges associated with the *Standards.*

To refer to the questions used in the survey, please refer to Appendix 7.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is employed in the study to answer the questions that emerge from the relationship between what is said by respondents and its significance to their social activity and school structures. For the purpose of this study, Critical Discourse Analysis is defined by Luke (1995) as

> analysis set out to generate agency amongst students, teachers and others by giving them tools to see how texts represent the social and natural world in particular interests and how texts position them and generate the very relations of instructional power at work in the classroom, staffroom, and policy (p.12-13).

To this extent, the approach used in this study has been influenced by Fairclough's (2010) premise that humans are responsive to their world and through this interaction, make meaning of situations that give them a unique voice and social agency.

Further to this, the study has also drawn on Gruenewald's pedagogy of place (2003), which presupposes that every place is different and that in identifying difference, individuals are required to shift their understanding of the curriculum and to make meaning of the rural experience in a new way.

1.7.   Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter 1 provides the introduction to the study and an overview of the situational context of the research. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the background of how standards of practice have emerged in the Australian educational landscape from early competencies-focused policy until the release of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* in 2011. Chapter 3 provides the methodological approaches used to conduct this research to fulfil the aims of the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the four key areas of investigation and reports on the three career phases identified in the study. Chapter 5 discusses the results of the study with implications for practice with the *Standards* and some recommendations for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview

The call to respond to educational reform in Australia has been a long-standing agenda item for policy makers, educators, government agencies, professional teaching organisations and community members. At the heart of teaching is the desire to improve learning outcomes for all students in ways that are responsive to the skills, understandings and knowledge that they require for living in a contemporary world. To best facilitate improvement in learning, requires investment in building the capacity of teachers (Hattie, 2009) and this is supported by a growing body of literature that confirms that teacher quality influences the achievements of students (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Reynolds, 1999; Rowe, 2004). This literature review will explore the challenges and successes of policy writers, educational institutions and teachers to determine standards of practice.

As a way of exploring this, the literature review will also examine the movement from the 1990s competency-based standards of practice until the release of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) to acknowledge the development of teaching *Standards*. Finally, the review will also explore the significance of situational context as a way of examining the relationship between rural teaching experience and the role that professional learning plays in responding to the *Standards*.

2.2. The Call to Reform

Dinham (2013), points out that the quality teaching movement in Australia has been on the learning reform agenda for "decades" and states that there has been at least

one "national inquiry into teacher education every year for the past 30 years" (pp.91-92). Scott and Dinham (2002) make the claim that the learning reform movement is set in the context of a larger political agenda that has adopted strategies to redress perceptions that Australian education has been operating in 'crisis-mode' for some time. They sum this up with,

> calls to change education have frequently been cloaked in the language of improving standards or quality…the need to improve standards has become a staple of educational debate and the device used to justify intervention in schools and schooling (p.19).

Within this context, teaching standards according to Kriewaldt (2012), "are regularly described as a mechanism for improving the status of the teaching profession and a means to develop high-quality teachers" (p.31). The call to reform has been a constant catch-cry since the late 1990s that has looked to competencies-driven standards to standardising and regulating teaching practice.

This part of the literature review has explored the emergence of standards of practice from competencies to the more current *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) policy text. To understand why standards of practice have been at the forefront of the learning agenda, it is important to explore why teacher quality remains critical to this discussion.

According to Mayer (2014), the development and implementation of teaching standards is not a new phenomenon on the Australian educational landscape. Researchers such as Louden (2000), Sachs (2003) and Mulchay (2011), point out that within the socio-political context of the 1990s, teaching standards emerged because of varied government initiatives targeting educational policy reforms linked

to improving teaching and learning. Improvement in teacher capacity through quality teaching practice is not a new concept according to Mayer, Mitchell, Macdonald, and Bell (2005), yet despite this, the notion of competencies evolved in the late 1980s and 1990s and recognised the need to seek standardised levels of practice to enable improvement to teacher quality (Mulcahy, 2011; O'Meara, 2011).

Initially influenced by state government school systems, the first wave of standards according to Louden (2000), and also acknowledged by the earlier work of Reynolds (1999), were competency-based as a means of demonstrating what teachers could do in terms of their proficiency as educators. Despite this, Sachs (2003) and Louden (2000), both agree that the competency-based standards were not well received by teachers and their professional associations, because they attempted to de-contextualise the process of teaching by fragmenting teachers' skills into narrow sets of achievement-style competencies. Latter competency-based standards developed in the late 1990s, appeared to have a challenging reception according to Louden (2000), who suggests that this was because of the "notorious inability of Australian educational authorities to sustain collaboration across state boarders … leading to 'national' standards having no national currency" (p.123). A matter that continues to be contested by researchers such as Sachs (2003), who claims that "standards cannot be frozen in time" (p.175) and that they need to be malleable to respond to varied contexts and accessible.

Louden (2000), points to the areas of challenge that made the transition from competencies-based standards to the current descriptor-based *Standards* complicated. In this he identified the extensive lists of duties with generic skill-sets

and obscure use of "opaque" language as obstacles (p.124) to determining their clarity. Mayer et al., (2005), reinforce Louden's (2000) stance, by suggesting that they lacked clarity because they were fragmented and de-contextualised the practice of teaching, rendering it a "technical activity with little contextual meaning" (p.160). Nonetheless, despite attempts to establish clear standards of practice through the 1990s, there remained discontentment between professional teaching associations and teachers as they grappled to define and articulate the purpose of teaching standards.

2.3. Emergence of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

The period from the 1990s and into the new millennium reflected a time of continued development of teaching standards with a greater movement towards a consolidated vision for quality teaching. The *National Framework for Professional Standards* [MCEETYA] (2003) claimed to provide a consistent national approach to teaching and learning which "… recognis(ed) quality, as well as to facilitating a national co-operative approach in supporting teacher quality" (p.6) and this in itself was a major point of difference from earlier reform policy models. O'Meara (2011), identifies three key policies as pivotal to promoting a consistent national response to learning with a common vision of "high-quality schooling for all young Australians" (p.423). These include: the 1989 Hobart Declaration, the 1999 Adelaide Declaration and the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australian*s (2008), as contributing to the collective vision for goals that looked to promoting equity and excellence in learning.

Inherent in *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australian*s (MCEETYA, 2008) policy was the understanding of two key ideas that were influential in shaping the current *Standards*. Firstly, that nationally agreed goals needed to be established to provide a platform from which to address the matter of quality teaching and learning. Secondly, that there needed to be a common language that could be used to discuss professional teaching practice at a national level. In response to the push by government agencies and educational systems (Dinham, 2013) the quality teaching movement gave voice to public educational debate through the formation of the *Australian Institute for Teaching Standards and Leadership* (AITSL) in 2010. This body would now be entrusted to deliver the first national standards framework that would consolidate the goals of *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australian*s (MCEETYA, 2008) into developing *The National Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). In the context of a new goals-driven learning agenda, *The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) has now assumed the pivotal role in professional accreditation of teachers across Australia (AITSL, 2011; Nelson, 2013).

To support the needs of teachers, the *Standards* makes the claim that it provides a framework to "guide professional learning, practice and engagement facilitate(ing) the improvement of teacher quality and contributes positively to the public standing of the profession …" (p.2). Unlike previous policies, this new direction in educational reform provided, according to Mayer et al., (2005), a mechanism to "simultaneously regulate the profession and enhance its status" (p.160). With this has come an explicitness that frames the *Standards* at a national level to agreed foundational goals that align with the practice of teaching and learning.

2.4. The Purpose of Teaching Standards

Across the research, there are varied responses to identifying the purpose of the teaching *Standards*. Some researchers have suggested that the purpose of the *Standards* is to provide frameworks to engage teachers in professional conversations that support improvement (Nelson, 2013). This sentiment was reinforced by Dinham, Collarbone, Evans and Mackay (2013) who like Nelson (2013), claim that they served the purpose of enabling professional self-development that leads to improved learning outcomes.

In contrast, Mayer (2014), describe their purpose as a "quagmire" with further inference that they "do not appear to come from any systematic view of education as a field of knowledge, nor a reflection of teaching's daily reality…" (p.468). This has been reiterated by others such as Forde, McMahon, Hamilton, and Murray (2016), Gorur (2013), Kriewaldt, (2012) and Connell (2009), who critiqued teaching standards claiming that their purpose derived power from a discourse that only rewarded those who conformed to them (Kriewaldt, 2012). This idea has been additionally reinforced by other researchers who have suggested that standards act as a tool of compliance for the purpose of quality assurance (Forde et al., 2016; Groundwater-Smith, 2009; Sachs, 2003). The divergent opinions expressed have done little to clarify the intended purpose of the *Standards*. In fact, what has been created is a level of speculation around a perceived hidden agenda of imposed regulatory systems at play. One of the questions that arises at this time, is, do the *Standards* serve 'multiple masters' and if so, who controls them and for what purpose?

According to the introductory statement in the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011), it states the purpose of the policy is to "describe the knowledge, skills and understandings expected of competent and effective teachers … to ensure the integrity and accountability of the profession" (p.1). This has suggested a correlation between effective teaching and professional integrity and also presents the supposition that the knowledge, skills and understandings are a measure of competence. This has assumed that the body of knowledge, skills and understandings (referenced in the policy) is commonly understood by all teachers. An extension of this is the assumption that the attainment of knowledge, skills and understanding can reasonably be achieved by all teachers; over different stages of their careers and in varied contexts. This case study, will therefore explore the correlation between a policy which has national currency for accreditation and professional expediency, and the implicit assumption that it can means, or will mean, the same thing to all teachers, irrespective of their context.

2.5.   Defining Standards

As a way of understanding the complexity of the *Standards*, it is necessary to consider the multitude of definitions that underpin the meaning of the term. According to Gorur (2013), our world "… is saturated with standards, (that) permeate all spheres of our lives" (p.132) and while this may be true, as part of this investigation, it is necessary to consider the breadth of the definition, particularly in the light of Sachs' (2003) claim, that there is conjecture around the use and meaning of the term. For the purpose of this study, various definitions will be considered to gain a broad understanding of the term.

Sachs (2003) states that *Standards* "… defines what teachers should be able to do and what they should know" (p.177). This interpretation is interesting because it suggested that *Standards* intimate demonstrable levels of proficiency. This notion was also supported by other scholarly literature (Gorur, 2013; Gronn, 2000; Mayer et al., 2005; Mulcahy, 2011) that claimed *Standards* are understood to be tools which regulate levels of achievement for teachers. Gronn (2000), on the other hand, perceives *Standards* are "a vehicle for those who steer systems to micromanage the day to day work of institutional personnel" (p.554). This suggests that *Standards* are instruments used to control teachers and engender a kind of professionalism that is dominated by a performance-based discourse (Beck, 2009).

Sachs (2003) further suggests that *Standards* represent a mechanism for quality assurance and accountability of teachers. This definition infers that assurance is generally understood as a process of attaining consistency for teachers. Therefore, measuring assurance and accountability would be part of understanding what attaining a *Standard* of practice might mean or what it might like for a teacher.

Sachs' (2003) additionally promotes the understanding that *Standards* support professional improvement to facilitate student achievement. In this she argues that in engaging with a standards-based framework, teachers are in fact complicit in the on-going learning process that, "becomes an ideological tool for teachers to do more under the guise of increasing their professionalism and status" (p.184). What these varied interpretations of the term *Standards* confirm, is that word 'standards' has been absorbed into educational lexicon and policy and may, potentially, mean different things to different people. Nonetheless, it remains pertinent to investigate

how its meaning is received and interpreted by teachers who are currently engaging with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) and what meaning they bring to it usage in their professional lives.

2.6. Difference between Professional Development and Professional Learning

The use of the term 'professional development' and the more recent popular usage of the term 'professional learning' may suggest interchangeability in terms of educational lexicon but there appears to be distinct differences. The term professional development is complex to define because of the broad meanings associated with it, but on the whole, it can be summed up as changes made to practice to improve performance (Desimone, 2009). Easton (2008), on the other hand, claims that term professional development is no longer adequate in harnessing what is expected of contemporary teaching and learning. She attests to the difference between professional development and professional learning when she claims that,

> If all educators needed to do was to develop (that is, grow, expand, advance, progress, mature, enlarge or improve), perhaps development would be enough. But educators often find that more and better are not enough. They find they often need to change what they do, on a daily basis, as they respond to the needs of learners they serve. Doing this takes learning… Developing is not enough (p.755).

The notion that change and adaptiveness are linked to professional learning calls on teachers to operate in new ways. This is supported by Huber (2010), who suggests that meaningful professional learning requires both collaboration and sustained professional dialogue to be effective. Fullan (2013) offers an alternate perspective and suggests that it is more about what 'new' learning looks like and the application to 'new' practices. Given that both professional development and professional

learning definitions focus on the impetus of teacher change, it is safe to say that the difference between them relies on professional learning to be transformational in nature. Thus, what is required in the rapid world of educational change is a new kind of professional learning that is adaptable to new situations with a mindset that is adaptive and responsive (Tait-Mccutcheon & Drake, 2016). The scholarly works of Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009), Desimone (2009) and Huber (2010), support that the notion that professional learning must centre on transformational learning experiences which build teacher capacity. This is particularly more effective when professional learning is structured coherently, relevant to the needs of teachers and is an on-going process of professional engagement (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Huber, 2010; Stevenson et al., 2016).

In order to adapt to the changing educational landscape, where more is expected of teachers in terms of their skills, knowledge and understandings, professional learning has also changed to respond to what Hargreaves (2000), describes as the "age of increasing uncertainty" (p.162). Where once teachers operated in isolation from their colleagues (Stevenson et al., 2016; Zielinski & Hoy, 1983), teachers are now embracing a new kind of professional learning that is more collaborative in nature. Hargreaves (2000) describes this period as in time where,

> working together can help teachers pool resources, and make shared sense of and develop collective responses towards intensified and often capricious demands on their practice. It also calls for new skills and dispositions, and far more commitment of time and effort, as teachers rework their roles and identities as professionals in a more consciously collegial workplace (p.162).

In summary, it is a given that professional learning in its varied forms enables teachers to meet the twenty-first century learning skills that are inherently expressed

in the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). That being said, gaining access to professional learning in regional schools that is relevant, sustained and meets the varied needs of teachers in different context, is critical to how regional teachers are able to engage effectively with the *Standards*. This becomes all the more important, when the *Standards* are linked to the professional accreditation of teachers.

2.7.   The Voice of Regional Teachers

Ho (2014), provides some insights on the preliminary feedback from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) on how the *Standards* have been received by educators. She claims that teachers are starting to explore how the policy may influence their practice (Ho, 2014) but there is little other literature available on the perceptions of regional teachers currently engaging with the *Standards.* So, at this nationally current, and early implementation stage of the *Standards*, it is beneficial to capture the voice of regional teachers, and to analyse their experiences to better understand the impact of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) on their professional lives.

2.8.   Defining the Regional Context

When people think about regional Australia, they often conjure images of sleepy country towns, and while this image may be true of some regional towns, it is not true of all communities in regional Australia. As a way of responding to the stereotypes associated with regional communities, the report, Talking Point: Foundation of Regional Australia (2014) states that,

too often the term 'regional Australia' is shorthand for small rural towns, when people talk about regional Australia they usually have one type of community in mind – small, with most people working in agriculture and a long way from any capital city. While there are many communities like this in regional Australia, most are different. To respond to the needs of our regions, it is essential that we move beyond this one-dimensional view (p.1).

For the purpose of this case study, the term 'regional' is defined as being situated outside a major metropolitan city and this may include variations based on proximity from services and population density (Baxter, Hayes, & Gray, 2011). The Australian Bureau of Statistics classifies geographical remoteness within New South Wales into 5 distinct areas based on the Accessibility-Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA):

1. Inner Regional Australia
2. Outer Regional Australia
3. Remote Australia
4. Very Remote Australia
5. Migratory

For this investigation, the limitation of the case study will include 'regional schools' geographically located within the inner and outer regional locations in New South Wales. The sites used for investigation are listed further in this case study.

2.9. The Notion of Place

A vast body of literature supports that there are divergent ideas at play when reporting on the differences between regional school experiences and urban metropolitan experiences in education (Gruenewald, 2003; Hudson & Hudson, 2008; Lester, 2011; Noone, 2015; Sullivan, Perry, & McConney, 2014). What exists is a tension between acknowledging geographical place and understanding the notion of 'place' as a complex phenomenon of situational context rich in diversity and difference.

According to Gruenewald (2003), place is a unique social phenomenon characterised by the "particularities of where people actually live" (p.3). Noone (2015) explains that this uniqueness comes from the diversity of populations and occupations that give a dynamic understanding of rurality and the experiences that emanate from it. In recognising the unique qualities of place, educators (scholars and policy writers) are encouraged to acknowledge diversity in place as characteristic of individuality. So just as urban school experiences differ, so too do the experiences of teachers in rural communities (Graham & Miller, 2015; Noone, 2015). Yet despite this, there exists a tension between how the rural experience is expressed, and how it is represented in research literature. According to Green et al., (2013) this leads to a sense of displacement. Squires (2003), argues that sometimes the rural schools themselves reflect "potential disadvantage" (p.35), when they respond to situations that are perceived as under-achievement or disadvantage and what results is a "self-fulfilling expectations driven by overt or covert curriculums being enacted" (p.35). Noone (2015), agrees that the language used in representing the rural experience (even at a research level), comes from a sense of 'other'. She concludes by stating that,

> research generated by researchers living and writing in urban environments necessarily reflects the rhythms of urban life... if we want social theory that represents and is appropriately formulated for rurality, we must address the site of the research, and in particular the language in which the research is expressed (p.58).

2.10. A Place of Otherness

Therefore, it is important to recognise that much of the language used in research to express the rural experience comes from a deficit discourse or place of 'other'. It is

also important to heed Noone's (2015) advice, and conduct research in the site from which 'otherness' emanates so that regional experience is represented with authenticity.

By way of alternate explanation of 'otherness', Roberts (2013) claims that it comes from an increasing detachment between curriculum and pedagogy that render the importance of place of little worth. He describes this as a kind of placeless consciousness that has lost sight of "align(ing) what is taught, with how it is taught, and who it is taught to in meaningful educational activities" (p.91). It is important to appreciate the role that school self-image plays in how the rural experience is expressed (Squires, 2003). This is reinforced by Gruenewald (2003), who like Roberts (2013), reflects the view that curriculum requires teachers to self-regulate their practice against external benchmarks like those espoused in the *Standards.* Kalervo, Gulson and Symes (2007) suggest that,

> …education allows popular stereotypes of the rural as distant, disadvantaged, difficult and fearful to inform policy and justify centralization and standardisation in the name of quality and equity... in this respect, an authentic place-conscious curriculum is one that is conscious of place, recognising the value inherent in all places, and does not artificially separate curriculum from pedagogy (p.91).

In recognising that the language of rural research is often framed as a negative discourse and that rural experiences are often represented as similar (McConaghy, 2006), it is important to conduct research in this area because of the underlying assumptions around rural education. It is, therefore, of value to give voice to regional teachers' experiences in ways that capture authentic narratives of place, so that new policy represents the broad experiences of all teachers. This becomes even more important in the light of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL,

2011) policy because it has national currency and immediate impact on the accreditation of teachers.

McConaghy (2006) claims that "policy, curriculum, and pedagogy are ascribed for the rural by the metropolis…" (p.334), and thus suggests what quality teaching should look like from an urban perspective. This kind of mindset can potentially marginalise the experiences of educators who are metaphorically 'out of sight and out of mind', because education is happening 'out there'.

2.11. Professional Learning in the Regional Context

One of the challenges for regional teachers is access to professional learning and given that engagement with it is critical to enable their continuous improvement (Hattie, 2009; Johnson, 2007), it is important that is accessible to all (Maxwell, 1991). Findings from the *National Science, ICT and Mathematics Education in Rural and Regional Australia* (SiMERR*) Report* (Tytler, Symington, Malcolm, & Kirkwood, 2009) conducted into regional and rural Victorian schools concluded that the lack of availability to obtain relief staff directly impacts on teachers being able to access professional learning.

 A teacher in this 2009 study reflects on the experience by explaining that,

> …you don't always get a qualified teacher to come and replace you. So, if I leave my Year 12 IT class, they would just flounder for the whole time I'm gone. So, you just can't take those days off (p.12).

Participants in the same study also claimed that distance, accommodation and time played a major role in inhibiting access to professional learning (Tytler et al., 2009). Similar experiences are also expressed by Panizzon and Pegg (2007), who argue

that time to collaborate on programming and inadequate teacher mentoring processes often inhibit the professional improvement of teachers.

Jenkins, Reitano and Taylor (2011), describe the rural teaching experience as "an enigma" that is dependent on perceived teacher priorities (p.71). Given that early implementation of the *Standards* has already begun, and will continue, and from January 1, 2018 be mandatory, Jenkins et al., (2011) suggests, that urgency may just be a matter of perceived priority by regional educators. Gruenewald (2003), challenges educators to explore how place and policy can work together to promote a consciousness understanding of the rural experience. Carter (1999) argues that,

> … the interconnectedness of these contexts is not always sufficiently acknowledged in policy initiatives aimed at rural communities and that the 'messy, nonlinear complexity' of rural schools and communities is not always addressed by comprehensive, cross-disciplinary responses. There is strong argument suggesting that policy and procedural responses pertaining to rural communities need to take into account the peculiarities and realities of rural communities as 'places' (p.25).

 Even with the small scale of this study, there is intrinsic and pragmatic value in conducting this research because it can potentially provide insight on the strengths and challenges faced by regional teachers as engage with the *Standards*.

2.12. Conclusion

The review of this literature in Chapter 2 provides an overview and discussion of the historic development of the *Standards* and their purpose. This chapter also presents a range of definitions associated with *Standards* to propose that this term may have multiple meanings. It also provides discussion on the difference between professional learning and professional development in relation to meeting the needs

of contemporary learning. Finally, it explores the notion of place and determines that regional schools have unique characteristics that require specific professional learning needs.

Chapter 3 presents an overview on the pilot study undertaken as the precursor to the latter study. This chapter identifies the research methodology and design used to explore how and why regional teachers have engaged with the *Standards*. It examines how qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed to examine the nature of the relationship between professional learning and regional teachers' attitudes to the *Standards*. In addition, Chapter 3 identifies how Critical Discourse Analysis is employed to analyse teachers' responses to research questions.

3. RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

3.1. Overview

This chapter identifies the research question and outlines the pilot study that took place prior to commencing the formalised investigation in January 2017. It then presents the methods and design used in the study and describes how data were collected, analysed and reported to investigate the research question. This chapter also identifies the limitations of the study and the potential ability to transfer the findings of this case study to other educational contexts and further research.

3.2. The Research Question and Study Focus

The research question is:

How and why have regional teachers engaged with the *Standards?*

Narrowing the research focus has enabled the exploration of attitudes and experiences of participants as they have interacted with the *Standards*. This study explores how and why regional teachers have engaged with the *Standards* to investigate the nature of the relationship between professional learning within a regional context, and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011).

3.3. Research Method

3.3.1. Pilot Study

The pilot study involved three teachers from three different regional school sites. Each teacher was experienced with more than four years of service. Their data were not included in the totality of the sample used in the investigation. The pilot study was designed to test the reliability of instruments and the suitability and phrasing of the questions in the interview and survey.

As this research was conducted in a regional setting where internet access can sometimes be problematic, each participant in the pilot study accessed the survey using *SurveyMonkey* from their school and home computer to test the bandwidth and internet access from different regional locations. The participants and the researcher also tested a sample of the questions used in the interview by digitally recording an interview over the telephone to also ensure that connectivity was available.

Participants then provided verbal feedback to the researcher on:

1. the usability of the survey on *SurveyMonkey* and any related concerns regarding bandwidth or internet access and the clarification of questions used in the survey and
2. the questions used in the interview with attention to the clarification of expression or word choice.

The feedback was relayed over the telephone and the researcher made journal notes on the feedback provided. Any additional adjustments as a result of the feedback were implemented prior to conducting the research in January, 2017.

3.3.2. Participants

All participants in this study were volunteers with no expected demographic prescription or restriction in terms of their years of teaching service and/or role at their school. Participants in the study were randomly selected from those who confirmed their involvement through responding with the letter of consent.

3.3.3. Letters of Consent

Having gained approval to conduct research from Macquarie University Human Ethics Board and by the Catholic Education Office of Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese, the researcher obtained written consent from each school Principal. A copy of the consent letter was provided to each Principal and participant. For a copy of Ethics Approval from Macquarie University and from the Catholic Education Office of Canberra and Goulburn, please refer to Appendices 1 and 2.

The initial letter of interest was then followed by a reminder email or telephone call to each school's Principal to discuss the nature of the research and to canvass their school's potential involvement. Having secured the Principal's authority in writing to engage participants in the study, the researcher then sent each school Principal an advertising poster promoting the study to teachers. Contact with participants was secured through email, text or telephone call. Each participant was sent a participant's consent letter by email. Please refer to Appendices 3 and 4 for a copy of the Letters of consent (Principal) and (Participant).

3.3.4. Research Advertising

The researcher designed an information poster to canvass participants for the study. The poster was sent to Principals as a hardcopy and digitally so that it could be disseminated to staff. For a copy of the advertisement poster, please refer to Appendix 5.

3.3.5. Confidentiality

Securing the confidentiality of data is critical to the principles of ethical investigation. To ensure this, the participants in the study were given pseudonyms to safeguard their respective identifies. Similarly, the school sites were attributed alphabetised letters to code their names and secure their anonymity. The letters A, B, C, D and E were aligned to the individual five school sites. Please refer to Table 1 on page 48 to identify the pseudonyms and codes attributed to the respective participants and school sites.

To ensure the confidentiality of interview data, transcripts were made from the digital recording and the data were only made available to the researcher and her supervisor. In addition, a written reminder regarding the anonymity was written into the interview script to maintain ethical protocols.

3.3.6. Concurrent Mixed-Method Research Paradigm

The research employed mixed-methods inquiry in a concurrent case study framework to gather qualitative and quantitative data to understand the research problem. The purpose of using the concurrent mixed-methods was to reinforce the

qualitative narrative responses provided in both the interview and survey against the statistical data obtained in the survey (Creswell, 2009). The mixed-method approach was pertinent to the study because it supported the aims of the investigation, namely to explore the varied perceptions of 'how' and 'why' regional teachers have engaged with the *Standards*. It also allowed for both narrative responses and statistical data to be collected to support and cross-reference 'how' teachers interacted with the *Standards* to establish:

- the role of induction or familiarisation processes with the *Standards* at regional schools;
- the role of school-based professional learning and other forms of professional learning;
- the experiences of regional teachers at different stages of the career; and
- the attitudes or perceptions of regional teachers towards the *Standards.*

The 'why' focus of the question was supported by the mixed-method approach in that it enabled participants to explore, describe and explain and provide numerical data to quantify the varied motivations for engagement with the *Standards.* The statistical information supported the sequential development of data with the overall effect of what Creswell (2009) describes as the process of "building on the other" (p.121). Thus, the researcher was able to consider and quantify data through triangulation.

3.3.7. Qualitative Data

The study employed the qualitative instrument of an interview to measure the relationship between how and why teachers engaged with the *Standards* and used

the quantitative questions in the survey to measure the perceptions of teachers. The two reasons for combining both qualitative and quantitative data were to firstly, better understand the relationship between the *Standards* and role that professional learning played in accessing the twenty-first century skills in the policy. Secondly, it was to consider if the *Standards* mean the same thing to all teachers in different contexts.

One of the benefits of the qualitative method according to Agee (2009), and reinforced by Yin (2014), is that it provides insight into the intentions and perspectives of those who are involved in social interaction. The questions designed in the research targeted the participants' exploration, explanation and description of experiences with the *Standards* so as to enable an understanding of unique social phenomena (Mackenzie & Ling, 2009)*.* This was pertinent to the study because of the importance of place as a factor that may potentially contribute to, or influence, how educators have responded to national policy; an interesting notion explored in the work of Gruenewald (2003), Wallace and Boylan (2009) and Roberts (2013).

Agee (2009), reminds the researcher that well-structured qualitative questions "invite a process of exploration and discovery" (p.434) and to this end, the questions developed in the interview and survey were structured to invite narrative and reveal emergent patterns in the responses of participants. This was achieved by developing preliminary questions that were broad and designed to elicit holistic understanding of the *Standards* and then later, more narrowly-focused questions that provided more complex narrative reflections. For a copy of the questions used in the interview and the survey, please refer to Appendices 6 and 7.

3.3.7.1. Administration of the Interview

Having secured consent from the participants, the researcher emailed the participants to organise a mutually appropriate time to conduct the telephone interview. Once this was organised, the telephone call to the individual participant was made by the researcher. All participants were reminded that they would be digitally recorded. A pre-written script was used to guide the interviewer, please refer to Appendix 6. The interview was later transcribed, and this together with the audio recording was filed on the personal computer of the researcher. Access to these computer files is password protected.

3.3.8. Quantitative Data

Robson (2011), reinforces the value of collecting even a small amount numerical data because of how it can support the purpose of an investigation. The benefit of having collected small scale quantitative data in this study was that it enabled cross-case data to emerge. The primary instrument used to obtain numerical data was *SurveyMonkey* which facilitated the ability to 'key in' data from participants based on a series of semi-structured questions developed by the researcher. This type of data facilitated confirmatory analysis used to reinforce the qualitative response of participants. The questions used in *SurveyMonkey* have been provided in Appendix 7.

All nine participants in the study came from five regional school sites in New South Wales and were contacted through the early recruitment process through the school sites. Initially, the study had secured eleven participants who completed the survey

but two of the participants withdrew, leaving a total of nine participants across five schools to undertake involvement in the study. The two participants who withdrew from the study had their data removed from the survey. 22.22 % of the participants in the study were identified as Early Career Teachers. The teachers described as Early Career Teachers had three or less years of teaching service. 33.33% of participants were identified as Experienced Teachers. These teachers had four or more years of teaching service and finally, 44.44% of participants were identified as Experienced Teachers with additional leadership roles. A summary of the table of participants, their teaching classification, school site identifier and type of school is available from Table 1 on page 48.

3.3.8.1.   Administration of the Survey

Having acquired consent to participate in the study, the researcher contacted each participant by email to state her readiness to send the survey. The researcher acknowledged written confirmation from the participant before sending the survey via email. Having completed the survey, the researcher acknowledged the receipt of the finalised survey with an email.

Statistical data was obtained from the survey in Questions 1, 2, 2 a, b, c, d, e, f and g. The survey applied the Likert Scale identifying five alternate expressions labelled as: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'undecided', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' (Ingrid, 2006). The remaining questions on the survey drew on quantitative data.

3.3.9. Case Study Methodology

Case study methodology is often used, according to Barth and Thomas (2012), and Simons (2009), as a research strategy to describe a context specific praxis that offers the researcher multiple understandings of place. This notion is also supported by Yin (2014), who reinforces that case studies often arise out of a need to better understand a social situation, and as such, concurs with Simons (2009), who addresses the potential of this methodology in offering insights into the uniqueness of contexts. Case study for this purpose offered the best methodology to harness multiple perspectives in a real life context (Simons, 2009). Thus, the case study methodology was employed because of its ability to enable empirical inquiry of single cases (Harland, 2014) which in turn, facilitated the employment of replication design (Yin, 2014) to explore different perspectives.

This method was also critical in supporting the aims of the study because of the nature of the research problem that prompted exploration of the perceptions of regional educators as they engaged with the *Standards*. The importance of context here was also fundamental because of the inquiry on 'place' as a potential site of tension. The case study method enabled the researcher the opportunity to explore varied perspectives with the intent of considering how individual studies have contributed to the totality of the case study findings (Yin, 2014).

3.3.10.   Semi-structured Interview

The semi-structured interview form was employed to collect qualitative data from nine participants because it facilitated an opportunity to explain, express, describe and/or clarify experiences on how and why teachers engaged with the *Standards* at

their schools. The interviews took place on the telephone in the setting of the participants' homes or schools at a mutually organised time. Roberts (2013), reminds the researcher of the value of engaging the participant in their 'place' because it,

> encourages the subjects to open up about their experiences of place… the approach also allows the researcher's familiarity with the rural context and subject area to be used in interpreting the participants responses in an open and transparent manner (p.92).

For a copy of the semi-structured interview questions, please refer to Appendix 6.

3.3.11.   Ethical Considerations

In order to proceed with this case study, approval was gained to conduct research with human subjects as specified by the Macquarie University Human Ethics Board Similarly, approval was granted from the Canberra Goulburn Archdiocese Catholic Education Office. For a copy of Ethics Approvals, please refer to Appendices 1 and 2.

The supervisor was also made aware that five of the nine participants used in the study were known to the researcher before conducting the research. To ensure transparency and observe ethical protocols, the researcher was very self-aware of how she conducted herself as a professional researcher. The researcher maintained a professional demeanour to ensure that the roles of researcher and participant were maintained. This has meant that the researcher has needed to take decisive steps to remain objective.

3.3.12. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is employed to analyse teachers' responses to research questions about the relationship between language and society. It presupposes that language is the tool used by people to articulate "the relations between relations" (Fairclough, 2010, p.3), and expresses what groups of people consider as valued, significant or irrelevant in their social activity. Fairclough (2010), suggests that CDA includes the relationship between how and why people communicate in diverse forms. It also informs "how power structures or institutions relate to praxis as an expression of social activity" (pp.3-4). According to Luke (1995), CDA sets out to explore how people make meaning of the world by "constructing social actions and relationships required in the labour of everyday life" (p.13). CDA according to Fairclough (2010), offers a "transdisciplinary form" of analysis methodology that attempts to construct meaning of communication, systems and structures that operate in the social world (p.4). Discourse is described by Fairclough (2010), as a way of "constraining aspects of the world (physical, social or mental) which can be generally identified with different positions or perspectives of differing groups of social actors" (p.232). As an extension of this, discourse then allows individuals to make meaning of social practice that is constructed in language (Fairclough, 2010; Luke, 1995).

The application of CDA to the study, has provided a critical lens into "the linguistic *description* of language text, *interpretation* of the relationship between the discursive processes and the text, and *explanation* of the relationship between the discursive processes and the social processes" (Lin, 2014, p.219). The discursive practices of the participants in the study have been concerned with how they have consumed, distributed and interpreted the *Standards* (Anderson, 2001; Fairclough, 2010) in

relation to how teachers have engaged with, and understood what the *Standards* mean in their professional lives as educators.

CDA draws on Fairclough's (2010) three-tiered framework as lens to critically analyse the data in this study. To this end, the first dimension of CDA involved descriptive analysis where the intent was to describe the language properties of the data. The second dimension involved interpretive analysis where the goal was to examine the language and its functional parts to understand and interpret the connections between the role of language and the greater social structures that the text reflected and/or supported. The third dimension, and final phase, was the societal analysis that focused on explanations of larger cultural and/or social discourses surrounding interpretations of the text. Luke's (1995) definition of text has been used to clarify meaning to include "written or spoken language that has coherence and coded meanings" (p.13).

The application of the CDA lens to this case study facilitated the study of language to reflect the attitudes and experiences of participants as they came to terms with understanding what the *Standards* mean. This lens also gave the researcher insight into how regional teachers have chosen to communicate what they considered as valuable, significant and/or irrelevant to their professional lives as educators. CDA was appropriate for exploratory research, such as the current study, because it offered opportunity to describe, analyse, and interpret the *Standards* at a local, institutional, and societal level. The analysis of discourse through the critical lens also provided understanding about power within a community, and how power has the potential to motivate or influence varied responses from participants.

The CDA framework is summarised by Collins (2001), as three considerations which included critical analysis of language at a:

1. **textual level -** which involved the interpretation of key words, connotations, metaphoric associations, tone, word choice, voice, with language to do with the *Standards*.

2. **discursive level -** which involved the analysis of the conditions of production or interpretations of the *Standards*, contexts, the role of participants and any assumptions related to the *Standards*; and

3. **society-wide level -** which involved identity formation, construction of metanarratives that may have been present, critiqued or resisted in the *Standards* (pp.144-145).

3.3.13.   Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

Researching place while working in a rural context may according to Roberts (2013), influence the researcher's own experiences of place (p.92) and this is why it is so important that the researcher safeguard the validity of the research. Maintaining a professional demeanour during the research was critical because the researcher was known to some of the participants as living and working in a regional context.

One of the potential ethical dilemmas inherent in being an 'insider' may be that people who share common experiences may also share a unique position in terms of understanding and/or empathising with participants (Bridges, 2001; Ilana, 2017; Kline, Soejatminah, & Walker-Gibbs, 2014). The term 'insider' is defined by Staples

(2001), as "a researcher who shares the same or similar characteristics as the community members with whom s/he is working…" (p.56). To avoid bias, reflexivity is critical to positioning the researcher from a standpoint that they come to the investigation receptive to difference and openness (Kline et al., 2014), but also mindful that they are according to Staples (2001), "in the same boat as everyone else and part of the common struggle , sharing the same hopes, fears and dreams" (p.27). This has meant that the researcher has needed to take decisive steps to remain objective, ensuring that she keeps a distance from the topic (Wodak, 1999) allowing the data to "speak for themselves" (p.189).

The strategies that were employed to remain objective in this investigation included firstly, verbally reminding all participants that the interview was being digitally recorded. Secondly, not adding additional commentary into the interview process and inadvertently reinforcing a perspective or stance presented by a participant. Finally, to safeguard the positionality of researcher, the interview script included prompting questions to ensure that the researcher did not deviate from the objectivity of the process. Ilana (2017), makes suggestion that researchers should always be cognisant of potential ethical dilemmas.

3.3.14.   Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of the investigation was size of the sample which included five regional sites and nine teachers. However, the sites selected represented a cross-section of school types, populations and drew from inland and coastal NSW regional schools to maximise opportunities to represent variation of data. This enabled the totality of the case study data to contribute to the conclusion (Yin, 2014).

Despite the small size of the study, it has presented a comprehensive analysis that has yielded rich data capable of supporting a larger study in a similar or contrasting contextual setting (Corcoran, Walker, & Wals, 2004). A final limitation, was the limited time frame that was available to conduct the study before the period of January 1, 2018 that provided a narrow opportunity to collect, collate and analyse data.

3.4. Conclusion

Chapter 3 has demonstrated the methodological approach that has been applied in the study. It has provided an explanation as to how and why the Critical Discourse Analysis lens has been used as the preferred critical pathway in this investigation. It is hoped that other researchers may find the application of the methodologies, results and conclusions useful in further research.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the results of the study, based on the experiences of early career teachers, experienced teachers and experienced teachers in leadership roles. It also outlines the sites of study in regional New South Wales schools and provides an overview of the participants selected. Chapter 4 also explores the attitudes of teachers in four distinct areas of focus namely: how and why regional teachers have engagement with the *Standards*; the purpose of the *Standards*; professional learning and the *Standards*; and professional efficacy related to the *Standards***.**

4. RESULTS

4.1. Overview

This chapter presents the findings about the ways regional teachers have engaged with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). The study explored the perceptions of nine New South Wales regional teachers across five sites and analysed data drawn from an interview and a survey. The findings in this study offer a window into the period before January 1, 2018; this date marks the mandatory period when all NSW teachers must engage with the *Standards* to maintain their professional accreditation. The results presented here include the experiences of teachers who have already begun the process of professional accreditation.

4.2. Sites of Study

The nine participants were drawn from five varied regional school sites in New South Wales. The term regional is defined as being situated outside a major metropolitan city and this may include variations based on proximity from services and population density (Baxter et al., 2011). This study included two primary schools (Sites A and B) and two composite primary and secondary schools (Sites C and E) and one secondary school (Site D).

The teacher participants and their school names are de-identified to ensure anonymity. Please refer to Table 1 on page 48, to indicate the pseudonyms of participants and their teaching classification, school site identifier and also identifies

the type of school. Please refer to Table 2 on page 50 to identify the previous teaching experience of participants.

Table 1   Table of Participants and Types of Schools

Summary of teaching classification, school identifiers and types of schools

Teacher Pseudonym	Teaching Classification	School Site Identifier	School Type
Ashton	Early Career Teacher	Site A	Primary
Hal	Experienced Teacher & Leadership role	Site A	Primary
Maggie	Experienced Teacher	Site B	Primary
Suzie	Experienced Teacher & Leadership role	Site B	Primary
Mark	Experienced Teacher & Leadership role	Site B	Primary
Daniel	Experienced Teacher	Site C	Primary & Secondary
Hanna	Experienced Teacher	Site C	Primary & Secondary
Tony	Early Career Teacher	Site D	Secondary
Katrina	Experienced Teacher & Leadership role	Site E	Primary & Secondary

Note. Teachers classified as early career teachers have less than or equal to three years of teaching experience. Experienced teachers are those who have taught for more than four years and do not hold a leadership role within their schools. Experienced teachers in leadership roles are those who have taught for more than eight years and hold a leadership position at their school.

4.3. The Participants

The focus of this investigation was regional teachers in New South Wales who had recently engaged with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) between the period of January to May, 2017. Nine participants were drawn from five regional schools and represented a cross-section of teaching experience and types of schools.

4.3.1. Profile of Participants

Two teachers in the study were identified as Early Career Teachers. These are teachers with less than or equal to three years of teaching experience. This group represented 22.22 %of the total study's sample. The remaining seven teachers were identified as experienced teachers with four or more years of teaching experience. This constituted 77.7 % of the total sample. Of these teachers, four hold leadership roles within their schools and have taught for more than 8 years (refer to Table 1 on page 48). This represented 44.44% of the sample. These leadership positions include: Principal, Assistant Principal, Stage Leader or Coordinator, but the roles have not been linked to the teachers in the study so that participants remain anonymous.

The nine participants currently teach in regional school locations. One third of the participants have both regional and urban teaching experience (Refer to Table 2 on page 50). Please refer to Table 3 on page 51, to identify the relative size of each participant's school in terms of student and teacher population. The actual location of each of the regional school sites was not identified in the study to maintain the anonymity of the participating schools.

Table 2   Table of Participant Experiences

Summary of teaching classification, years of teaching experience, school identifier and regional Vs urban teaching experiences

Teacher participants	Teacher Classification	Years of Experience	School Site Identifier	Regional Vs Urban
Ashton	Early career teacher	<3	Site A	Regional
Hal	Experienced teacher & Leadership role	>8	Site A	Regional
Maggie	Experienced teacher	>4	Site B	Regional
Suzie	Experienced teacher & Leadership role	>8	Site B	Regional
Mark	Experienced teacher & Leadership role	>8	Site B	Regional
Daniel	Experienced teacher	>4	Site C	Regional & Urban
Hanna	Experienced teacher	>4	Site C	Regional & Urban
Tony	Early career teacher	<3	Site D	Regional
Katrina	Experienced teacher & Leadership role	>8	Site E	Regional & Urban

Note. This table shows the teaching experiences in relation to years and the location of those experiences.

Table 3   **Table of Student and Teacher Population**

Summary of student and teacher population across the school sites

School Site Indicator	Type of School	Student Population	Teacher Population
A	Primary	112	11
B	Primary	295	20
C	Primary & Secondary	547	49
D	Secondary	509	48
E	Primary & Secondary	236	23

Note. The *My School* website (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2017) was used to obtain data on a school's population. Table 3 shows each school's size and teacher population. This table shows the type of each school with a cross-section of the size of each school and a breakdown on the student Vs teacher population.

4.4.   Findings of the Study

This chapter presents the findings of nine teachers in a sample of five school sites that show the perceptions of teachers in four focus areas:

1. engagement with the Standards;

2. purpose of the Standards;

3. professional learning and the Standards; and

4. professional efficacy related to the Standards.

Each of these areas is aligned with the questions used in the interview and the survey (Refer to Table 4 on page 52).

Table 4   Alignment between focus areas, Interview and Survey Questions

Summary of cross-sectional alignment in the study

Focus Areas	Interview Questions	Survey Questions
Engagement	1	1, 2 a & b
Purpose	2 & 3	2 c, d, e & 3
Professional Learning	4 & 5	2 f, 3, 4 & 5
Professional Efficacy	6, 7 & 8	2 g, 3 & 5

These findings are grouped under three career stages.

1. Early career teachers;

2. experienced teachers and

3. experienced teachers in leadership roles

4.5.   Engagement with the Standards

The data presented in this part of the study aligned with Question 1 of the interview and Questions 1, 2a and 5 of the survey. In the interview, participants were required to identity when they last engaged with the *Standards* to explore their recent familiarity them. Questions 1, 2a and 5 of the survey provided quantitative data on the amount of time allocated to learning about the *Standards.* It also required teachers to gauge their familiarity of the *Standards* on the Likert Scale, and explore how the *Standards* were introduced at their respective schools. The Likert Scale captured five alternate expressions labelled as: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'undecided', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' (Ingrid, 2006).

4.5.1. The Perceptions of Early Career Teachers

The qualitative data revealed that 55.5% of permanent teaching staff had engaged in either formal induction processes or specific professional learning on the *Standards*. Both of the Early Career Teachers had participated in formalised professional learning on the *Standards* at their schools. This was reinforced by the two Early Career Teachers from Sites A and D, who agreed that they had recent engagement with the *Standards* through their process of accreditation. Ashton from Site A, claimed that she "knew a bit" about the *Standards* and Tony from Site D stated, that his level of familiarity was based on his, recent professional development.

The findings indicated that to progress through the accreditation process, both teachers agreed that they needed to seek additional support beyond what was offered at their schools. Ashton, from Site A provided an account of "… spend(ing) probably hours on the phone to people about it". The exaggerated tone in her word choice "hours" reflected her dissatisfaction with the process. She continued to explain her growing sense of isolation from other educators in, "It's been me having to do it, not been given to me, whereas I think it should be a priority for first-out teachers to receive help…". Ashton compared her experiences with that of city teachers and stated, "…I know a lot of city people might have the opportunity to have people coming to their schools… we definitely don't have any advocates coming to our schools". Ashton's employment of active voice highlights her strong assertion that there is no advocacy for regional schools. Tony from Site D, like Ashton, agreed that "there were times that he needed to address things himself" so that he could

continue working towards his accreditation. This is supported by the quantitative data that showed that 33.3% of participants surveyed did not agree that their school provided adequate familiarisation with the *Standards* and of these, 11% of those surveyed, strongly identifying that their school did not provide an induction process or professional learning to develop familiarisation with the *Standards*.

4.5.2. The Perceptions of Experienced Teachers

The three experienced teachers from Sites B and C agreed their level of familiarity with the *Standards* was achieved from either school-based professional learning and/or from their prior experiences. Maggie from Site B, had worked in alternate industry prior to teaching and had gained familiarity with industry-based standards "for a number of years". Maggie felt that her earlier experiences had helped her understand how to apply the teaching *Standards* said that she found them "refreshing". The word choice "refreshing" has connotation of revitalising and infers that education may require energisation or a new outlook. Maggie's positive engagement with industry-based standards reflected her confidence in transitioning to the teaching *Standards*.

Hanna and Daniel, both from Site C, identified that they had received induction in the *Standards,* but that they also drew on their prior experiences to help them consolidate their understanding of how to apply them. Both teachers engaged with the *Standards* to set their professional goals and supported other teachers with their application of goal setting. Hanna provided an anecdote of having previously worked with less experienced teachers to support them through the process accreditation when she taught in a city school. She stated, "The only reason I'm probably more

familiar with them than a lot of other people of my vintage, is because of when I was in the state system doing a Head Teacher mentor job". Daniel, like Hanna gained familiarity with the *Standards* from elsewhere and he too offered commentary about his experiences of having taught in the United Kingdom and in a Victorian city school. He described this experience as being "beneficial" because he gained "different expectations of work practice" and was confident in applying the *Standards*.

4.5.3. The Perceptions of Experienced Teachers in Leadership Roles

The four experienced teachers in leadership positions agreed that they used the *Standards* to support staff development. Suzie from Site B, expressed that she used the *Standards* to facilitate professional conversations and that this enabled her staff to gain familiarity with the language of the *Standards*. She stated, "I actually wanted to focus the professional conversations around the *Standards* and us(ed) their terminology just as a means of getting some of the teachers more use to that language". She achieved this by having a whole staff meeting, but lamented the fact that the she did not have more time because "there were many things on the learning agenda". Hal and Katrina from Sites A and E used the *Standards* to either help their staff "set their personal goals" or "develop their Professional Learning Plans". Both leaders engaged their staff with the *Standards* through formal and informal conversations to help develop their teaching goals. Hal described this taking place "as required", while Katrina said this only "took place at the beginning of the year". Mark from Site B, like Katrina, used the *Standards* to help his staff "connect them" to a whole school goal to help his teachers "just see where they wanted to go for 2017". He also claimed that his staff only addressed the *Standards* at the start of the

year because they "were only allowed one or two whole school meetings over the term".

Half of the experienced teachers in leadership positions explained that they engaged their staff with the *Standards* in at least one whole-school meeting during the school term. The other half used small groups or worked individually with teachers to help them apply the *Standards* to their accreditation or aligned them to their professional learning needs.

4.5.4. Conclusion

The findings in this section of the study indicated that engagement with the *Standards* was inconsistently represented across all three career stages. The Early Career Teachers were the group that received the least amount of consistent engagement with the *Standards.* Their level of familiarity required them to seek additional support beyond their schools. One of the teachers in this sample, Ashton from site A, suggested that she did not receive adequate support because she was a regional teacher. This comment highlighted the experience of place as a disadvantage whereby one regional teacher did not have adequate engagement with *Standards* which was as a barrier to completing the accreditation process.

Unlike the Early Career Teachers, the experienced teachers, had greater access to professional learning on the *Standards* at their schools. However, the inconsistency of this professional learning delivered at their schools meant that they supplemented it with experiences obtained from either previous city school sites or overseas or

industry-based experiences. Each of the teachers in leaderships positions, agreed that they provided opportunities for their staff to engage with the *Standards.* However, that professional learning was either delivered only once or twice a term for either writing goals or addressing the language of the *Standards.*

The findings suggested that professional learning and induction with the *Standards* was being offered in multiple and variable ways in the five regional sites. It also identified that there was one example of engagement with the language of *Standards*. Other examples of how the *Standards* were being initiated included through the process of accreditation and/or in the writing of professional goals. The findings also suggested that the two Early Career Teachers agreed that the school support available to them to work on their accreditation was inadequate. The experienced teachers on the other hand, drew on a broader range of learning beyond their regional school contexts to support others and/or develop their own goals.

4.6. The Purpose of the Standards

The data presented in this part of the study clarified the purpose of the *Standards*. Questions 2 and 3 of the interview reported on the purpose of the *Standards* at a school and national level. The survey Questions 2 b, c, d and e also reported on the participants understanding of *Standards* as a tool for professional accreditation. Question 3 of the survey provided cross-referenced qualitative data on the perception of purpose.

4.6.1. The Perceptions of Early Career Teachers

The two Early Career Teachers provided differing responses when asked about the purpose of the *Standards* at a school level. Tony's first response when interviewed about the purpose of the *Standards* was "I have no idea". He later said that they were used to "perhaps, validate professional learning?". The questioning inflexion at the end of this statement reflected his uncertainty and was later confirmed when he stated that "he had never been quite sure" of their purpose at school. Ashton described the purpose of the *Standards* at school level as a "checklist" to help her know where she "should be up to…".

When asked about the purpose of the *Standards* at a national level, they both agreed that the *Standards* were used to benchmark levels of competence against descriptors. This was supported by the survey that suggested that 77.7% of all teachers surveyed recognised that the *Standards* could be used to benchmark teacher achievement. Ashton claimed that their national purpose was to "keep our teachers at a certain level" and Tony suggested that they could be used to "standardised curricular across Australia". The data presented here, revealed that the teachers perceived that the *Standards* regulated the accountability of teachers. The implications of the word choice "keep" and "certain level" implied a level control of teachers from an external agency. This was reinforced by Tony who said that the *Standards* could be used to identify "potentially bad teachers". The negative implication suggested here is that *Standards* can be used as a regulatory watchdog to determine who can and cannot proceed to the next level or who could be deemed a 'good' or 'bad' teacher. A further implication is that the *Standards* are viewed as a controlling device that standardises curriculum across the nation, raising speculation as to who controls the *Standards* and to what purpose.

4.6.2. The Perceptions of Experienced Teachers

The three experienced teachers offered similar responses to the purpose of the *Standards* at a school level. All three acknowledged that their purpose was linked to identifying a measure of practice. Hanna from Site C, described this as "track(ing) practice" against "performance". Hanna's use of regulatory language such as the word choice "tracking' inferred that someone or somebody was keeping teachers accountable for their performance and that this involved measuring their progress against performance. Maggie from Site B, claimed that the *Standards* were used to "…reach establish(ed) high-quality practices" and Daniel from Site C, suggested that the Standards "outline(d) clear expectations for the teaching profession." Both Maggie and Daniel's interview accounts suggested that the *Standards* supported their understanding of the "clear" expectations required to demonstrate "high-quality" teaching.

4.6.3. The Perceptions of Experienced Teachers in Leadership Roles

The four experienced teachers in leadership roles presented diverse responses to the purpose of the *Standards* at a school level. Katrina from Site E, suggested that the *Standards* descriptors offered teachers a uniform way of expressing improvement in their teaching practice. While Mark from Site B, suggested that at a school level, that the *Standards* provided teachers with a way to engage professionally with each other. He summed this up through his own reflection that the *Standards* helped him "know where (he) wants to go with my own teaching … and how (he) can provide assistance to others". While Hal from Site A on the other hand, expressed that the *Standards* offered her professional direction, but they were

"a mine field" because they provoked uncertainty for many other less experienced teachers. The employment of the metaphor of a "mine field" suggested that the *Standards* are not universally understood and have the potential to create fear in the workplace. Whereas Suzie from Site B, suggested that the *Standards* were "useful for managing non-performance" of teachers at a school level. She claimed that they gave her "leverage" to make potential adjustment to her staffing that were underperforming. The term "leverage" denotes a position of authority or power over others.

At a national level, Suzie supported the understanding that the *Standards* were beneficial to the profession because "every other profession has them…". She further explored this by explaining that the *Standards* offered teachers national benchmarking to support her appraisal of staff. This reinforces the suggestion that the *Standards* can be used as a mechanism to promote authoritative compliance. This has also, supported by Hal's perspective who states that the *Standards* at a national level could be used as a "regulation tool" to keep teachers "on the same page when it comes to what is expected". Like Suzie and Hal, Mark and Katrina also suggested that the *Standards* at a national level created a "reference point" for teachers to help them "improve their performance". Katrina stated that teachers were kept accountable to "act like professionals" and that they offered "guidelines across the country" to better support teaching.

Suzie was the only participant in this group who stated that the *Standards* at a national level were politically motivated. She stated that the "government compares us to other countries such as Finland, rather than really helping teachers". Her

cynicism was captured in the tone used to stress the word "really", during the interview and later reinforced by the remark, "but I've been around for a long time and I'm cynical".

4.6.4. Conclusion

The findings from this part of the study reinforced that regional teachers understood that the *Standards* offered some benchmarking of practice. They also identified that experienced teachers suggested that this has helped other teachers understand what high-quality practice looked like. All three groups of teachers agreed that the *Standards* prescribed accountability through benchmarking practice against externally developed criteria that was deemed necessary for self-evaluation and regulatory practice. This was consistent with the survey respondents' rating that showed that 55.5% of teachers agreed that they knew what was expected of them to obtain high levels of practice. With a further 33% who strongly agreed that the *Standards* helped reinforce what high-quality teaching and learning looked like. Only one teacher in the study identified that the *Standards* were politically motivated to present a hidden agenda on how Australian education was perceived by government authority.

4.7. Professional Learning and the Standards

Questions 4 and 5 of the interview and Questions 2 f, 3, 4 and 5 of the survey questions focused on how professional learning supported teachers in their application of twenty-first century learning skills that are inherent in the *Standards*. It also focused on how professional learning on the *Standards* was delivered at respective school sites.

4.7.1. The Perceptions of Early Career Teachers

Ashton, from the smallest school site, said that she completed "some" school-based professional learning on the *Standards* and also stated that she "been sent off to seminars and completed online" workshops to better improve her understanding and application of the twenty-first century skills inherent in the *Standards*. She stated that she felt "overwhelmed" because "… she (had) so much other stuff she has to do". Ashton offered suggestion as to how she could better be supported through the accreditation process. She stated, "there should be people employed to come out to all schools…to give one-to-one talks…". She expressed her frustration by the employing hyperbole to describe the "hours spent on the phone" to get help from her employer. This raised speculation in the study as to what support was available to early career regional educators, particularly those in geographically isolated places or those in small regional schools.

Tony, from school Site D, offered similar experiences to Ashton from Site A. He too reported that despite being given a mentor by his school, whom he "barely ever met", that it "took him a long time to understand what the *Standards* meant". He recounted an anecdote when he sought professional learning support from a member of his school executive to leave the office feeling like he "(had) wasted (his) time because (he) still (didn't) understand what (the *Standards*) meant". The sharp tone in the word "wasted" reflected his increased level of frustration.

Despite this negative experience of not having sustained mentorship or finding a person in his school to help him apply the *Standards* to his accreditation process,

Tony felt that he had a firmer grasp of the twenty-first skills inherent in the *Standards* compared to his "older" colleagues because he used them "everyday in (his) practice". Both Early Career Teachers identified in the interview that professional learning was available at their schools, but that it was inconsistently delivered. They also both identified that they had to seek additional professional learning to support their unique early career needs. Ashton felt "frustrated" because she had a "massive workload as a teacher" and still had to complete additional professional learning in "her own time", while Tony described professional learning experiences at his school as in the "early stages". This was supported by the survey data that reflected that 11% of respondents disagreed that their school offered them professional learning opportunities to secure familiarisation with the *Standards*.

4.7.2. The Perceptions of Experienced Teachers

The experienced teachers in this sample presented a diverse range of responses to the data questions about professional learning and the *Standards*. Hanna expressed that her school had adequately prepared her to respond to the *Standards,* but that "other" teachers at her school were not receptive to engaging with them. She described the teachers at her regional costal school as being on "wind-down mode". She cited that the teachers "resented having (the *Standards*)" and saw them as "yet another re-invention of the wheel". Hanna's employment of sarcasm reflected the cynicism in her workplace. She offered explanation by relaying that her colleagues were "a stepping stone to retirement" and, therefore, disinterested. Hanna's consistent negative reference to the promotion of the *Standards* was highlighted when she claimed that her school had a "poor infrastructure for technology" which meant that she could not consistently perform her work. She described the access to technology in her regional site as "really inadequate for the population". She stated

that teachers "struggled with accessing twenty-first century skills because the infrastructure could no longer support the school adequately".

Maggie, from Site B, like Hanna, expressed that while her school had attempted to adequately prepare teachers for twenty-first learning skills that they were "probably behind". This was supported in the survey data that identified that 33% of participants were undecided if the *Standards* played a role in improving their capacity as teachers. She explained that this was because the executive at her school had not engaged with the accreditation process themselves. Maggie, stated that because "they were a small school with small staff" that was "out-of-the way", they had not been "exposed to it in any great form". Her perspective suggested that small regional schools are a low priority and that professional learning on the *Standards* was not relevant. Overall, her perception was that professional learning in her context was "ad hoc" and this was summed up with, "why bother, if the executive can't be bothered".

Daniel, who is from a school with 49 teachers, agreed with Maggie that his school had also not adequately prepared him to address the twenty-first century learning skills described in the *Standards*. He stated that because of his prior teaching experiences in an interstate city school that he had already "come to the school with the knowledge". He claimed that teachers at his school had not "had direct instruction or professional development on the *Standards* yet". He described professional learning at his school as a "discreet" delivery of skills and information.

All three experienced teachers in the study claimed that some attempt had been made at their respective schools to engage specific professional learning in twenty-first century skills. Two thirds of the participants agreed that professional learning was important to their profession and to the teachers at their schools. Only one teacher, Hanna, claimed that teachers at her school were not engaged with professional learning and Maggie claimed "Why bother?...". Despite this, all participants agreed that their experiences with twenty-first century skills development was either hampered by inconsistent internet access and/or a lack of consistent availability of professional learning.

4.7.3. The Perceptions of Experienced Teachers in Leadership Roles

Two of the four teachers in this study identified that there had been inadequate professional learning provided to teachers to support the twenty-first century skills identified in the *Standards* policy. Both teachers were from the school Site A in different leadership roles. Suzie offered explanation for the inadequacy because "it's been a big learning curve, a big learning jump". While, Mark offered explanation that despite being provided with "two meetings a term" had this had been insufficient to gain "depth" of understanding. Mark also offered additional commentary that the professional learning agenda was overcrowded because "we have other requirements to meet"; thereby suggesting that the *Standards* were not the highest priority.

Hal, from Site A, the smallest of all the schools in the study, suggested that her staff had access to professional learning opportunities, but that the resources available

to teachers were "severely lacking". Both school Sites A and B made reference to the inadequate level of resources to support the *Standards*. They also suggested that the two dedicated professional learning meetings a term were not sufficient to prepare teachers for twenty-first century learning skills in the *Standards*. Suzie claimed that "there hasn't been a whole lot of follow through due to inability to access external PD because it just cost so much to access it". Mark reflected on the lack of time spent on professional learning and the need "to do it more often" and his desire that he "hope(d) that they will send someone from the office to help us understand more about it because we can't get out to access the professional learning". This was supported by survey data that suggested that 33% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the time that has been spent on professional learning had been adequately prepared them to acquire a sound understanding of the *Standards.*

4.7.4. Conclusion

All four participants across school Sites A, B and E agreed that there was some level of professional learning that had occurred at their schools to support teachers with twenty-first century skills. Only one participant, Katrina from school Site E, stated that professional learning for developing twenty-first learning skills was restricted to only to Early Career Teachers. She described professional learning opportunities at her school as something that "they were moving towards". This highlighted a number of insights in the study and these primarily included that regional teachers may feel a sense of displacement if they are not connected to broader professional support or associations. It also highlighted the notion that regional teachers in this study believed that expertise on the *Standards* was best delivered from 'outsiders', from the city who are deemed to know more about the *Standards* than their regional

colleagues. Other participants also made reference to the cost of professional learning, problems accessing it, poor resourcing and limited professional learning opportunities because they were a small school.

4.8.   Professional Efficacy related to the Standards

Questions 6, 7 and 8 of the interview aligned with Questions 2 g, 3 and 5 of the survey and provided insight into the purpose of the classification system within the *Standards* and what the classifications meant to teachers. They also provided a understanding into the perspective of schools in terms of prioritising the *Standards* and explored the relationship between the role that the *Standards* play in the lives of educators and if they influenced the self-perception of teachers as professional educators.

4.8.1. The Perceptions of Early Career Teachers

Ashton, from Site A, suggested that the purpose of the classification system within the *Standards* denoted a specific level of experience. She equated each level of the classification system with a role at her school: for example, she explained that a Provisional Teacher was someone who was "trying to reach their first level of accreditation". Ashton also suggested that the classification system was aspirational in that teachers who wanted to progress in their career "would strive to go further". She equated the highest classification of Lead Teacher with the role of Assistant Principal.

When questioned what the *Standards* meant to her and if they were a priority at her school, Ashton explained that the *Standards* were a tool used to show levels of experience and that teachers could "work harder" if they were trying to reach the higher levels. When she was asked if the *Standards* were a priority at her school, she responded with the statement that they "were a low priority". She stated that she prioritised them in her teaching life because she was working to a deadline. Yet, despite this, her school "(didn't) really tend to know much about it". She said, "I don't really think they know where I'm at with (them)".

Tony on the other hand, stated that he "was not one hundred percent sure" of the purpose of the classification system within the *Standards*. He stated that he "assumed that they were aspirational" and that they had something to do with "extra work". He explained "I haven't even read them, so I don't know what extra they are asking for". Tony's responses reflected a disconnection with *Standards* and presented the assumption that the *Standards* entailed additional work for teachers.

When asked what the *Standards* meant to him, he stated that he "struggled to understand" them. He explained that his ability to understand the *Standards* was hampered because of his lack of English proficiency. He stated in the interview, "English is not my first language. The way that I was interpreting the *Standards* was not the way that it should have been interpreted…". He further described professional learning about the *Standards* at his school as "not a priority". Tony provided an anecdotal account of an experience to illustrate this point. He recounted an experience where he sought additional professional learning from a member of the school executive. He claimed that even members of his school executive

"struggle(d)… to break (the meaning of the *Standards*) down". Unable to access specific professional learning to support his language needs, Tony struggled to finalise his accreditation report.

Neither Early Career Teacher agreed that their respective schools prioritised the *Standards*. They also both agreed that the classification system was likely to denote a position of responsibility or level of experience at their schools. Tony revealed that understanding the *Standards* was complicated by his language proficiency. He also suggested that at least one other member of his school executive team also struggled to make meaning of the *Standards*.

4.8.2. The Perceptions of Experienced Teachers

Two thirds of the sample of experienced teachers stated that the classification system within the *Standards* denoted a specific level of accreditation. Maggie identified that the classification of teachers was skills-focused and "allow(ed) staff to go above and beyond". Hanna, like Maggie, equated the classification system to teacher skills and experience. Daniel described the classification system as "a pathway for people", providing a "clear benchmark of what teachers should be doing". All participants agreed that the classification of teachers within the *Standards* was closely linked to teaching experience and skills in demonstrated achievement.

Hanna, unlike the other respondents interviewed, claimed that teachers believed that the *Standards* "pigeonholed" individuals. She suggested that while the classification of teachers denoted their experience and skills, it also "categorised" them. She drew

on her experience of working with others and suggested that this kind of categorisation of teachers was a "significant obstacle" for teachers implementing their use. Hanna claimed that teachers at her school "don't like" being classified, especially those who have taught for many years. She also suggested that experienced teachers needed to "realise that (teaching) is a profession" and that benchmarking experience and skill puts "measures in place." Despite this, Hanna suggested that the *Standards* were not a priority at her school, but that her understanding and prior experiences in applying them had affirmed her capacity as a teacher.

Maggie, like the other respondents, recognised that the classification system in the *Standards* denoted acquired experiences and skills. She also suggested that the classification of teachers was linked to salary. She explained that the link to salary acted as an incentive for teachers to achieve higher levels of accreditation. However, when asked if the *Standards* were a priority at her school, Maggie responded that they were not a priority. She explained that the reason that the *Standards* had not been prioritised was because very few staff members had engaged with them. She claimed that the staff in school Site B were waiting to engage with the *Standards* on the mandatory date and not before this period.

Daniel suggested that the *Standards* meant little to individuals at his school. He explained that experienced teachers ought to be leading projects and, therefore, be Highly Accomplished yet, he witnessed less experienced teachers "leading staff development". He claimed that for this purpose, the *Standards* were useful for the accountability of new teacher, but less useful to others. When asked if the *Standards*

were a priority at his school, he described the situation as "a bit of carrot and a bit of stick". This expression inferred that the *Standards* are used as both a motivational and regulatory tool to control teachers.

All three experienced teachers had experienced some level of familiarity with *Standards* prior to coming to their respective schools. Maggie drew on her pre-teaching experiences and claimed that she had engaged with standards of practice in another industry. She suggested that because she had familiarity with them in another context, that she considered the *Standards* "refreshing".

Daniel also drew on his prior experiences of the *Standards* and said that because he had gained considerable experience with working with *Standards* in the United Kingdom, that this had helped him understand how to apply them to his practice. He also compared his overseas experiences to his current regional experience, and said one of the challenges inherent in regional education was that that the *Standards* were not part of the teaching culture of schools in Australia. He felt affirmed by his additional experiences with the *Standards* and felt that they contributed to his developed capacity as an educator.

Hanna also drew on her prior experiences of when she worked in another educational system. She claimed that the *Standards* were useful for Early Career Teachers to help them develop a sense of professionalism, but that they were less valuable for experienced teachers, such as herself. She stated, "I don't really want to have to re-learn anything… and I don't need anyone to tell me how to teach". The

interview data reflected that all two thirds of experienced teachers considered that the *Standards* informed their sense of professional identity.

4.8.3. The Perceptions of Experienced Teachers in Leadership Roles

Two participants from school Site B concurred that the classification system within the *Standards* was used to benchmarks skills and experiences of teachers. They also both confirmed that their schools had not fully engaged with the *Standards* because they were not considered a priority until the time of mandatory implementation. Suzie explained that her identity as a professional educator was established "long before the implementation of the *Standards*". Both participants from school Site B agreed that the *Standards* better served Early Career Teachers than more experienced ones.

Hal claimed that the classification system within the *Standards* had opened "a can of worms" at her school because the *Standards* were prescriptive and did not take a holistic perspective of teachers. She describes the process of attaining accreditation as "having to jump through hoops" and stated that it was not a priority. Hal did not respond to the question about the self-efficacy of teachers.

4.8.4. Conclusion

The data presented in this part of the study suggested that most teachers across the three career stages perceived value in the *Standards.* More than 55% of teachers in the survey indicated that the *Standards* influenced their sense of professional efficacy. Yet two of the three groups (namely the experienced and Lead teachers)

agreed that the *Standards* best supported the needs and efficacy of Early Career Teachers, more than their own sense of professional efficacy. The data also suggested that teachers in leadership roles did not equate the classification system with their own sense of efficacy. In contrast, those who had gained additional experiences beyond regional schools expressed confidence in applying the *Standards* to their practice and that this affirmed their sense of efficacy as professional educators. Yet contrary to this, the survey data reflected that more than 89% of all respondents claimed that they understood that the *Standards* were developed to refine, extend their knowledge and skills to enhance their professional capacity. This part of the research presented conflicting data. While, teachers on the whole felt a sense of familiarity with the *Standards*, and acknowledged that the *Standards* would enhance their capacity. The more experienced teacher claimed that they would most benefit the Early Career Teachers who were still developing sense of professional identity.

Overall, the findings in Chapter 4 indicated that engagement with the *Standards* was inconsistently represented across all three career stages. On the whole, the Early Career Teachers received the least amount of consistent engagement with the *Standards* and required the greatest amount of professional learning. The findings from Chapter 4 also demonstrated that all three groups of teachers agreed that the *Standards* prescribed specific levels of accountability through benchmarking practice against externally developed criteria that was believed necessary to encourage teacher evaluation and regulatory practice. Only one participant suggested that the *Standards* were politically motivated to suggest a hidden agenda.

The study also reflected two interesting insights about the perceived delivery of professional learning. Firstly that, regional teachers believed that expertise on the *Standards* was best delivered from 'outsiders', from the city or from 'the office' who were deemed more likely to know more about the *Standards* than their regional counterparts. Secondly, that the relative cost of professional learning, access to the internet and associated problems accessing relief staff influenced professional learning opportunities particularly in the smaller regional schools.

Finally, Chapter 4 reinforced that most teachers across the three career stages perceived value in the *Standards* and understood that they were developed to enhance their professional capacity. Yet, the more experienced teachers agreed that the *Standards* best supported the efficacy of the Early Career Teachers, who were still developing their sense of professional identity.

Chapter 5 presents the overall conclusions and implications of the study and highlights that sustained professional learning plays a critical role in implementing a national policy. It also identifies that teachers required an understanding the purpose of the *Standards* to better engage with, and apply, them to their accreditation and reflection. To this end, the conclusions in the study also identify that the *Standards* can be interpreted in multiple ways and that there is no common understanding around the language usage of the *Standards*. Moreover, a contextual understanding of place may influence the perceptions of how regional teachers relate with the *Standards.*

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate how and why regional teachers engaged with the *Standards*. The study explored the perceptions of regional teachers to investigate the nature of the relationship between professional learning and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011).

The implications from the study's findings can be identified in four key areas. Firstly, the importance of professional learning when implementing policy so as to inform understanding. Secondly, the significance of understanding the purpose of the *Standards* and what motivates teachers to engage with the policy. Thirdly, how contextual understanding of place influences the perceptions of regional teachers, and their relationship with the *Standards.* Finally, that the *Standards* can be interpreted in multiple ways and there are implications from this.

5.2. Professional Learning and the Standards

The findings in this study suggested that there was a dominant view that professional learning played a significant role in supporting regional teachers inform their professional growth. This was strongly reflected in the data that suggested that all the teachers recognised the implicit value of professional learning as a mechanism to improve their capacity. This notion is also strongly supported in scholarly literature (Avalos, 2011; Louden, 2000). However, when this same edict was applied to the *Standards*, this is not consistently represented in the data.

Helsby (1995), argues that teachers associate training with being a professional. Therefore, in valuing the role of professional learning, teachers have adhered to what has been expected of them by their schools or school leaders. She further claimed that, "teachers appear very aware of their responsibilities and are anxious to fulfil people's expectations of them" (p.321). This was particularly true of teachers from Sites A, B and D of the sample, who claimed that they valued the place of professional learning in supporting them understand the *Standards*. Hanna from Site C added that while she valued the role of professional learning, not all the teachers at her school were as supportive because they were preparing for retirement and thus, inferred that they were irrelevant to some teachers. A similar double-standards sentiment was expressed by other participants who felt that professional learning on the *Standards* was very useful for Early Career Teachers, but was not applicable to experienced educators.

This may perhaps explain why the familiarisation with the *Standards* was described as "ad hoc" or "discrete". Nonetheless, this raised speculation on who the *Standards* serve and for what purpose. A further example of this paradox was evident with Maggie from Site B, who claimed that she found the *Standards* "refreshing" but yet presented the attitude of "why bother, if the executive can't be bothered", when it came to her professional learning on the *Standards*. This highlighted the importance of ensuring that any professional learning program offered at regional schools is made relevant to all teachers at different stages of their career path (Helsby, 1995; Jenkins, Reitano, & Taylor, 2011). It also highlighted two emerging patterns: firstly, the need to be explicit about the purpose of the *Standards* as a framework for practice for teachers at different stages of their career. And secondly, that teachers

need to know enough about their own practice, in order to change and keep growing in their capacity (Easton, 2008). These findings and patterns indicate that if regional teachers continue to believe that the *Standards* only serve those who are at start of their careers, then they are likely to feel a sense of displacement with the *Standards* because they are deemed irrelevant. The underlying concern here, is that irrespective of this, teachers at all stages of their career will be expected to use the one framework to validate their status as professional educators.

A further emerging pattern was the inconsistent level of professional learning available at the time of inducting the *Standards* and the consequences of this. The effect of this high level of inconsistency was a point of tension for a number of participants. Most dominant were the voices the Early Career Teachers from Sites A and D for whom the lack of consistency hindered their progress on their accreditation. Both expressed either feeling "overwhelmed" (Ashton) or "frustrated" (Tony). This highlighted two significant implications in the regional space. In the first instance, that Early Career Teachers in regional schools require a network of professional support to ensure that they can understand and can apply the *Standards*. It is important to remember that teaching is a relational activity and is an "on-going process of learning, and developing problem-solving skills on the basis of context and in response to particular student needs" (Allard, 2014, p.44).

Traditionally, schools have operated on a face to-face professional learning model with either a senior teacher leading the learning or an outside 'expert' presenting the learning (Stevenson, Hedberg, O'Sullivan, & Howe, 2015). Burke et al., (2015), reminds the reader of the importance of schools offering a variety of professional

learning models to cater for the needs of many. Despite this, the study indicated that regional schools, on the whole, applied a more traditional model of whole day professional learning. In this study this meant that at least two schools in the sample only provided teachers with approximately six hours of face-to-face learning to support a complex document that has significant consequences on the careers of all teachers. Mark, an experienced teacher in a leadership role from Site B, was disappointed that he was not able to offer his teachers more time but was hopeful that "the office" would send help. An interesting notion that suggests that regional schools look to the corporate office to 'save' them from a perceived inadequacy and hope that they have a solution to helping teachers better understand the *Standards*.

An additional insight gained was that some regional teachers resisted the *Standards* because they were perceived as being mandated by an 'outside' authority that had little understanding of their particular context. Teachers in the study, therefore, conformed to professional learning by "jumping through hoops", but were disgruntled about having to find additional time to complete more professional learning on the *Standards*. Again, this resonated very strongly with the research of McConaghy (2006), who argued that policy is ascribed "for the rural by the metropolis", but goes on further to explore the consequence of this by claiming that,

> the rural is constructed within policy as a homogeneous entity, as somehow different to urban, but with enough similarities of purpose to urban to bind both within a met-narratives about good teaching and effective schooling that are context free (p.334).

As an extension of this, McConaghy's (2006) study also reflected the perception that regional teachers valued city experiences more than those experiences attained in the regional space. This was reinforced in the research of Roberts (2013), who

argues that continued detachment from the rural learning experience may increase disassociation from the curriculum that may be expressed as a deficit discourse. Alternatively, it may also be expressed as indifference or submissive conformity with the rural experience being considered less worthy.

The data from the case study acknowledge the following barriers to sustaining professional learning: inadequate access to current professional learning on the *Standards*, added costs associated with off-site professional learning and inadequate access to teacher relief. In addition, the study also reflected that poor resources and inconsistent availability to the internet made demonstrating the twenty-first century learning skills inherent in the *Standards* unachievable in one regional school (Site C). The factors presented here raise some considerable complex implications for regional teachers who are likely to find demonstrating the broad descriptors in the *Standards* challenging.

5.3. Purpose and Motivation

Despite the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (ATSIL, 2011) articulating the purposes of the *Standards* in the introductory preamble of the policy, there were inconsistencies in the perceptions of teachers as to their purpose. According to Bourke and Carter (2016), there are "two schools of thought on the use of professional standards in education - a developmental approach and a regulatory approach" (p.2). A similar sentiment was reiterated by Daniel, who describes them as a "bit of carrot and a bit of stick", thereby suggesting he thought they served to reward and punish teachers.

The investigation on purpose revealed a broad range of perspectives presented: for example, Hal from Site A, described the *Standards* as a "mine field" and a "can of worms" because of the uncertainty that this had created in her staff. While she recognised their purpose as a tool to benchmark and "track" her staff, she was uneasy about the effect that they were having on people. Her staff member Ashton, perceived the *Standards* as a checklist of activities that kept her at "certain level". In this instance, the *Standards* have been enacted as a regulatory mechanism designed to the manage the performance of teachers. The power balance in this situation between the leader and teacher is held by the person performing the 'checking', while the individual being checked is rendered potentially powerless. This may provide a reason why Hal described the purpose of the *Standards* as a "minefield" ready to set off. Beck (2009), suggests that *Standards* can perform a dual purpose in "combining an explicit mode of address to its intended recipients as 'professionals' whilst systematically positioning them as trainees" (p.7). This powerplay was further reinforced in Site B, where the teacher in the leadership role stated that the *Standards* gave her "leverage" to performance manage teachers and support the process of appraisal. Other teachers also used the language of managerialism such as, "clear expectations" (Daniel and Maggie) and "reference point" (Katrina) as indicators that the *Standards* served the purpose of controlling teachers until they could "work harder" (Hal) to reach the higher accreditation levels. Codd (2005), makes the assertion that schools can become "obsessed with notions of quality" and that in the pursuit of attaining high standards "quality is a powerful metaphor for new forms of managerial control" (p.200).

The implication of this for the future, is that regional school leaders need to be mindful that they do not create a culture that uses the *Standards* as a kind of covert

monitoring system that controls performance (Beck, 2009). Moreover, that regional schools need to look to engaging explicit objectives, plans and monitoring systems when applying the *Standards* to facilitate transparency and good practice (Codd, 2005). Hattie and Clinton (2001) remind the reader that, "teachers are the more than the sum of their teaching. They are not actors on a classroom stage, whereby only their performance in the daily play of teaching are their defining acts" (p.283).

Nonetheless, the implication here is that regional schools need to be clear about how they intend to use the *Standards* and for what purposes. The danger of understatement, is that it may create an undercurrent of fear or suspicion in staff who believe that they are constantly under professional surveillance by the agent who controls the *Standards.* Alternatively, staff may begin to lose their sense of autonomy as reflective educators and revert to managerial practices as an expression of their identity (Sachs & Logan, 1990). Sachs (2003) reiterates that the *Standards* can be used for the purpose of "quality assurance and accountability" (p.177) to regulating teachers. This message was reinforced in the study with participants who suggested the *Standards* could be used to "identify potentially bad teachers" (Tony) or "keep teachers on the same page when it comes to what is expected" (Hal) or furthermore, to make teachers accountable to "act like professionals" (Katrina). The implicit warning within this discussion, is that educators or the agents who control how the *Standards* are applied, cannot judge teachers solely on performance without consideration of other the complexity of their practice as educators (Hattie & Clinton, 2001).

A third and unique perspective was presented by Suzie, who made a claim that the *Standards* had a hidden agenda that was politically motivated to compare Australia's progress against other nations. This sub-textual understanding of the purpose of the *Standards* suggests that there is potentially a much broader socio-political agenda at play (Scott & Dinham, 2002). Where regional education sits within the national agenda has not been explored in this study and would be an interesting area for further investigation.

5.4. Place and Perceptions

This study proposed that an understanding of a discourse of place was critical to appreciating and acknowledging the uniqueness of rural education. Reid et al., (2010) argue that there is a general perception that rural education operates at a deficit discourse because of the stereotypes associated with underachievement, transient staffing and isolation. Ultimately, the consequence of this mindset is counter-productive in representing the rural educational experience as a source of rich diversity and difference. The challenge for educators operating in regional schools is the implicit assumption within the *Standards* that the one policy can be accessible and mean the same thing to all teachers, irrespective of their context. Given that the *Standards* policy is a document which is intended to serve the needs of *all* teachers, at different career stages - can it be a valid tool to achieve this purpose? The data represented in this small case study have suggested that this cannot be validated. In the first instance, the data analysed from the nine participants consistently represented variant responses as to the intended purpose of the *Standards.* So, to this extent, the *Standards* cannot possibly mean the same thing to all teachers. Secondly, the data indicated that not all regional schools have access to the same level of resources or internet access to the twenty-first century practices

that are explored in the *Standards*. Given that access to the internet in at least one of the five school Sites (namely Site C), was inadequate, it indicates that some teachers are unable to demonstrate how they meet the needs of twenty-first century learning by applying the *Standards* framework to their practice. The matter of how this will be achieved for schools such as Site C remains a considerable concern. This also attests to the view that one policy cannot possibly satisfactorily be used as a common framework without consideration of the specific contexts of teachers.

5.5.   Multiple Meanings

The "appeal of standards" is that they can potentially offer what Yinger and Hendricks-Lee (2000), describe as a "simple desirable statements of goals and outcomes" (p.95). This, however, hinges on the assumption that all teachers understand the *Standards* to mean the same thing and, therefore, that their level of engagement with the *Standards* is consistent. On the one hand, the *Standards* may offer an efficient way of interpreting what needs to achieved (Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 2000), but on the other, they can be "ubiquitous" because they present an "ideal" of what quality teaching looks like (Gorur, 2013, p.133). Gannon (2012) argues that teachers need to be able to traverse the language of the *Standards* to be able to describe "their teacher identities through the framework of the standards as they engage self and peer-assessment…" (p.61).   Sachs (2003), reminds the reader that the term 'professional teaching standards' has moved into popular education usage and that as a result, it is open to interpretation. This is further explored by Sachs and Logan (1990) who suggest that "policy statements which are open to wide interpretation do not necessarily empower schools to react to local problems, rather they can make schools and systems dependent on serving other directed goals and problem" (p.479).

The case study draws on one very distinct example of where language has become an obstacle to understanding the meaning of the *Standards*. Tony from Site D, explained that English was not his primary language and he had misunderstood the meaning of *Standards*. Unable to find adequate literacy support at his school, he struggled to complete his accreditation report effectively. Given that this small case study has reflected the experiences of one non-native English speaker who has directly experienced challenge as a result of not being able to understand the language of the *Standards*, potentially then, on a larger scale, the implications of this would be considerable. So, despite acknowledging that teachers need familiarity with the language of *Standards* (Gannon, 2012), there remains an implicit assumption in the policy that all teachers have a level of language proficiency to be able to do so.

The implications for regional schools remain complex. It is clear from the diverse data collected and analysed that the *Standards* can be and are being interpreted differently. It is timely that those in roles of governance, consider the voices of regional teachers who are responding to their contextual settings and attempting to make meaning of a policy that has national professional acumen (Allard, 2014).

5.6.   Limitations

Given the small size of the case study of five regional sites and nine teachers this may be considered a limitation in this investigation. It is possible that the findings for the study may have differed if it had included a larger sample of sites and greater number of participants.

A further limitation to the study was the relative short time frame that was available to collect and analyse data. As it was, the study could not be extended beyond the given time frame because it aimed to investigate the period before the date of January 1, 2018, when all teachers across NSW will be expected to have begun the process of engaging with the *Standards.* A final limitation were the silent voices of remote teachers, who like regional educators, contribute to the totality of the rural educational experience.

5.7.   Future Research

Future investigation could potentially include the voices of remote teachers who would deepen the understanding of how and why rural educators have engaged with the *Standards*. Considering that the *Standards* have national currency, this body of knowledge may further contribute to the collective data on the rural educational experience in NSW or across states in Australia. This collective representation of data would extend the findings here ensuring that a broader range of rural voices could respond to the relationship between professional learning and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011).

Further to this, a larger cross-referenced investigation analysing the responses of urban and rural voices on the same conceptual problem would also contribute to the body of existing knowledge. This research would deepen understandings about the tensions, assumptions and strengths and challenges of educators applying a common framework.

5.8. Conclusion

This study on how and why regional teachers have engaged with the *Standards* has explored the nature of the relationship between professional learning, and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). In doing so, it has provided insights into the strengths and challenges of teachers working in the regional context by focusing on their responses, and considering their level of engagement with the *Standards.*

This study has also been positioned from a discourse of place that celebrates the diversity that characterises the regional space. In doing so, it recognised the individuality of each of the schools and has reported on the unique voices of regional educators. While this study may not definitively represent a broad scope of experiences, it has, however, provided an effective snapshot of the preliminary experiences and level of engagement of regional educators coming to terms with a new policy.

This study highlights the need for governing bodies, school leaders and those who offer professional learning to educators to consider applying what Wallace and Boylan (2009) describe as a "rural lens" to situations. In achieving this stance, one is required to embrace "a reversal of thinking" and begin "looking outwards for policy rather than being reactionary to policy developed in other places and times" (p.23). The implication here is that those who control how the *Standards* are being enacted at schools, should consider how to best position regional staff (and their leaders) to

challenge a deficit discourse by looking for ways to adopt a new mindset that values place (Green, Noone, & Nolan, 2013; Wallace & Boylan, 2009).

Having concluded this study, the researcher is left with a number of implications that warrant consideration, and these include the provision for consistent professional learning on the *Standards*. The inability to ensure this is likely to mean that regional teachers will be disadvantaged in being able to meet the descriptors within the *Standards*, hence making their accreditation process inaccessible and their level of engagement as haphazard. Given that the *Standards* have national currency, and that the data from this small sample reflect levels of unequal distribution of resources and technologies, a further important consideration is the need to consult on how regional schools are best positioned to deliver the kind of twenty-first century learning that is described in the *Standards*. It is proposed that this small case study may in the future contribute to a more comprehensive study of related experiences with the *Australian Professional Teaching Standards* (AITSL, 2011) particularly after January 1, 2018. Finally, it is hoped that this case study may shed light and interest on the diverse experiences of regional teachers working somewhere out there.

References

AITSL. (2011). *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. Melbourne: Educational Services Australia Retrieved from http://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/apst-resources/australian_professional_standard_for_teachers_final.pdf.

Agee, J. (2009). *Developing qualitative research questions: a reflective process, International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Routledge, 22(4), 431-447.

Allard, A. (2014). Professional Knowledge and Standards-Based Reforms: Learning from the Experiences of Early Career Teachers. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 13*(1), 39-54.

Anderson, G. L. (2001). Disciplining Leaders: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the ISLLC National Examination and Performance Standards in Educational Administration. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 4*(3), 199-216.

Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher professional development in Teaching and Teacher Education over ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*(1), 10-20. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.007

Barth, M. & Thomas, I. (2012), Synthesising case-study research-ready for the next step?., *Environmental Education Research, 18*(6), 751-764.

Baxter, J., Hayes, A., & Gray, M. (2011). Families in regional, rural and remote Australia (Facts Sheet) Australian Institute of Family Studies.   Retrieved from https://aifs.gov.au/publications/families-regional-rural-and-remote-australia

Beck, J. (2009). Appropriating professionalism: restructuring the official knowledge base of England's 'modernised' teaching profession. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 30*(1), 3-14. doi:10.1080/01425690802514268

Bourke, T., & Carter, J. (2016)."There's nothing standard about standards": exploring tensions between two standards documents in higher education, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 1-16.

Bridges, D. (2001). The Ethics of Outsider Research. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 35*(3), 371-386. doi:10.1111/1467-9752.00233

Burke, P.F, Aubusson, P., Schuck, S.R., Buchanan, J. D., & Prescott, A.E., (2015). How do early career teachers value different types of support? A scale-adjustment latent class choice model. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 47, 241-253.

Carter, C.S. (1999). Education and Development in Poor Rural Communities: An Interdisciplinary Research, *Eric Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools*, accessed: 5 May, 2016 at http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED438154.pdf.

Codd, J. (2005). Teachers as 'managed professionals' in the global education industry: the New Zealand experience. *Educational Review, 57*(2), 193-206. doi:10.1080/0013191042000308369

Collins, J. (2001). Selling the Market: Educational Standards, Discourse and Social Inequality, *Critique of Anthropology, 21*(2), 143-163.

Connell, R. (2009). Good teachers on dangerous ground: towards a new view of teacher quality and professionalism. *Critical Studies in Education, 50*(3), 213-229.

Corcoran, P. B., Walker, K., & Wals, A. E. J. (2004). Case studies, make-your-case studies, and case stories: a critique of case study methodology in sustainability in higher education. *Environmental Education Research, 10*(1), 7-4622.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches / John W. Creswell* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Thousand Oaks, Calif. : Sage Publications.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Richardson, N. (2009). Teacher learning: What matters? (Research Review)(Survey). *Educational Leadership, 66*(5), 46.

Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving Impact Studies of Teachers' Professional Development: Toward Better Conceptualizations and Measures. *Educational Researcher, 38*(3), 181-199. doi:10.3102/0013189X08331140

Dinham, S. (2013). The quality teaching movement in Australia encounters difficult terrain: A personal perspective. *Australian Journal of Education, 57*(2), 91-106. doi:10.1177/0004944113485840

Dinham, S. Collarbone., P. Evan., & Mackay, A. (2013). *Educational Manangement Adminstration & Leadership, 41*(4), 467-483.

Easton, L. B. (2008). From Professional Development to Professional Learning. *Phi Delta Kappan, 89*(10), 755-759.

Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language / Norman Fairclough* (2nd ed.). Harlow, England, New York, Harlow: Harlow, England, New York: Longman.

Forde, C., McMahon, M. A., Hamilton, G., & Murray, R. (2016). Rethinking Professional Standards to Promote Professional Learning. *Professional Development in Education, 42*(1), 19-35. doi:10.1080/19415257.2014.999288

Fullan, M. (2013). The new pedagogy: Students and Teachers as learning partners. Learning Landscapes, *6*(2), 23-2.

Gannon, S. (2012). Changing lives and standardising teachers: The possibilities and limits of professional standards. *English Teaching, 11*(3), 59-77.

Gorur, R. (2013). The invisible infrastructure of standards. *Critical Studies in Education, 54*(2), 132-142. doi:10.1080/17508487.2012.736871

Graham, & Miller. (2015). *Bush Tracks: The Opportunities and Challenges of Rural Teaching and Leadership* (G. L. M. J Ed.). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers: Rotterdam.

Green, N. C., Noone, G., & Nolan, A. (2013). Contemporary paradigms of rural teaching: the significance of place. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education, 23*(1), 91.

Gronn, P. (2000). Designer Leadership: The Emerging Global Adoption of Preparation Standards. *Journal of school leadership, 12*(5), 552-578.

Groundwater-Smith, S. (2009). *Teacher professional learning in an age of compliance: mind the gap / Susan Groundwater-Smith, Nicole Mockler.* Dordrecht: Springer.

Gruenewald, D. A. (2003). The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place. *Educational Researcher, 32*(4), 3-12.

Hargreaves, A. (2000). Four Ages of Professionalism and Professional Learning. *Theory and Practice, 6*(2), 151-182. doi:10.1080/713698714

Harland, T. (2014). Learning about case study methodology to research higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development, 33*(6), 1113-1122.doi:10.1080/07294360.2014.911253

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning : a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement / John A.C. Hattie.* London, New York: London, Routledge.

Hattie, J., & Clinton, J. (2001). The Assessment of Teachers. *Teaching Education, 12*(3), 279-300. doi:10.1080/10476210120096551

Helsby, G. (1995). Teachers' Construction of Professionalism in England in the 1990s. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 21*(3), 317-332. doi:10.1080/02607479550038536

Ho, P. (2014). Interim findings from the evaluation of the implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. *Australian Educational Leader, 36*(2), 6-8.

Huber, C. (2010). Professional learning 2.0.(educators). *Educational Leadership, 67*(8), 41-46.

Hudson, P., & Hudson, S. (2008). Changing Preservice Teachers' Attitudes for Teaching in Rural Schools. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 33*(4).

Ilana, F.-R. (2017). Incorporating Perspective Taking in Reflexivity. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*(1). doi:10.1177/1609406917703539

Ingrid, L. (2006). Real World Research (2nd ed.) by Colin Robson. *Educate~, 3*(1).

Jenkins, K., Reitano, P., & Taylor, N. (2011). Teachers in the bush: Supports, challenges and professional learning. *Education in Rural Australia, 21*(2), 71-85.

Johnson, C. C. (2007). Technical, Political and Cultural Barriers to Science Education Reform. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 10*(2), 171-190. doi:10.1080/13603120601097470

Kalervo, N., Gulson., & Symes, C. (2007). *Spatial theories of education policy and geography matters* (Vol. 22). Portland.

Kline, J., Soejatminah, S., & Walker-Gibbs, B. (2014). Space, place and race: Ethics in practice for educational research in ethnically diverse rural Australia. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education, 24*(3), 49-67.

Kriewaldt, J. (2012). Reorienting teaching standards: learning from lesson study. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 40*(1), 31-41. doi:10.1080/1359866X.2011.643761

Lester, N. C. (2011). Relationship Building: Understanding the Extent and Value. *Education in Rural Australia, 21*(1), 79-93.

Lin, A. (2014). Critical Discourse Analysis in Applied Linguistics: A Methodololgical Review. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *34*, 213-232.

Louden, W. (2000). Standards for standards: The development of Australian Professional Standards for Teaching. *Australian Journal of Education*, *4*(2), 118-134.

Luke, A. (1995). Chapter 1: Text and Discourse in Education: An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis. *Review of Research in Education, 21*(1), 3-48. doi:10.3102/0091732X021001003

Mackenzie, N. M., & Ling, L. M. (2009). The Research Journey: A "Lonely Planet" Approach. *Issues in Educational Research, 19*(1), 48-60.

Maxwell, T. W. (1991). Professional Development Policy in a Small Rural Education System. *Australian Journal of Education, 35*(1), 89-106.

Mayer, D. (2014). Forty years of teacher education in Australia: 1974-2014. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *40*(5), 461-473.

Mayer, D., Mitchell, J., Macdonald, D., & Bell, R. (2005). Professional Standards for Teachers: A Case Study of Professional Learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 33*(2), 159- *Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 2005, Vol.2033 (2002), p.2159-2179.

McConaghy, C. (2006). Schooling Out of Place. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 27*(3), 325-339. doi:10.1080/01596300600838777

MCEETYA. (2008). Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. Retrieved from http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/Publications/National%20goals%20for%20schooling/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf

Mulcahy, D. (2011). Assembling the 'Accomplished' Teacher: The performativity and politics of professional teaching standards.(Report). *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 43*, 94.

Nelson, J. (2013). The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers : are they the best drivers? *Australian Educational Leader, 35*(4), 21-23.

Noone, G. (2015). Imagining a Teacher-Place Assemblage *Bush Tracks: The Opportunities and Challenges of Rural Teaching and Leadership* (1 ed., pp. 57-77). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

O'Meara, J. (2011). Australian teacher education reforms: reinforcing the problem or providing a solution? *International research and pedagogy, 37*(4), 423-431. doi:10.1080/02607476.2011.611009

Panizzon, D. & Pegg, J. (2007). *Chasms in Student Achievement: Exploring the Rural-Metropolitan Divide*, *Education in Rural Australia*, *17*(2), 3-20.

Reid, J., Green, B., Cooper, M., Hastings, W., Lock, G., & White, S. (2010). Regenerating Rural Social Space? Teacher Education for Rural-Regional Sustainability, *Australian Journal of Education*, *54*(3), 262-276.

Reynolds, M. (1999). Standards and Professional Practice: The TTA and Initial Teacher Training. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 47*(3), 247-260. doi:10.1111/1467-8527.00117

Roberts, P. (2013). The role of an authentic curricuculum and pedagogy for rural school and professional satisfcation of rural teachers. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, *23*(2), 89-99.

Robson, C. (2011). Real World Research, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons. Edition 3.

Rowe, K. (2004). In Good Hands? The Importance of Teacher Quality. *Educare News: The National Newspaper for All Non-government Schools* (149), 4-14.

Sachs, J. (2003). Teacher Professional Standards: Controlling or developing teaching? *Theory and Practice, 9*(2), 175-186. doi:10.1080/13540600309373

Sachs, J., & Logan, L. (1990). Control or Development? A Study of Inservice Education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 22*(5), 473-481. doi:10.1080/0022027900220505

Scott, C., & Dinham, S. (2002). The beatings will continue until quality improves: using carrots and sticks in the quest for educational improvement. *Teacher Development, 6*(1), 15-32.

Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice / Helen Simons*. Los Angeles, London: Los Angeles, London: SAGE.

Squires, D. (2003). Responding to isolation and educational disadvantage. *Education in Rural Australia, 13*(1), 24-40.

Staples, L H. (2001). Insider/Outsider Upsides and Downsides, *Social Work with Groups*, *22*(2), 19-35.

Stevenson, M., Hedberg, J. G., O'Sullivan, K.-A., & Howe, C. (2015). Development to Learning: Semantic Shifts in Professional Autonomy and School Leadership. *Educational Media International, 52*(3), 173-187. doi:10.1080/09523987.2015.1075100

Stevenson, M., Hedberg, J. G., O'Sullivan, K.-A., & Howe, C. (2016). Leading learning: the role of school leaders in supporting continuous professional development. *Professional Development in Education*, 1-18. doi:10.1080/19415257.2015.1114507

Sullivan, K., Perry, L., & McConney, A. (2014). How do school learning environments differ across Australia's rural, regional and metropolitan communities? *A Publication of the Australian Association for Research in Education, 41*(5), 521-540. doi:10.1007/s13384-014-0144-1

Tait-Mccutcheon, S., & Drake, M. (2016). If the jacket fits: A metaphor for teacher professional learning and development. *Teach. Educ., 55*, 1-12. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2015.12.005

Talking Point: The Foundations of Regional Australia. (2014). *November Report of Foundations of Regional Australia.* Retrieved from http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Foundations-of-regional-Australia-FINAL-.pdf

Tytler, R., Symington, D., Malcolm, C., & Kirkwood, V. (2009). Assuming responsibility: teachers taking charge of their professional development. *Teaching Science, 55*(2), 9-12,15.

Wallace, A., & Boylan, C. (2009). Reviewing the rural lens in education policy and practice. *Education in Rural Australia, 19*(2), 23-30.

Wodak, R. (1999). Critical Discourse Analysis at the End of the 20th Century. *Research on Language & Social Interaction, 32*(1-2), 185-193. doi:10.1080/08351813.1999.9683622

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: design and methods / Robert K. Yin* (Fifth edition. ed.): Los Angeles SAGE.

Yinger, R. J., & Hendricks-Lee, M. S. (2000). The Language of Standards and Teacher Education Reform. *Educational Policy, 14*(1), 94-106. doi:10.1177/0895904800014001008

Zielinski, A. E., & Hoy, W. K. (1983). Isolation and Alienation in Elementary Schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 19*(2), 27-45.

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval (Macquarie University)

MACQUARIE University   TANYA APPLEBY <tanya.appleby@students.mq.edu.au>

RE: HS Ethics Application - Approved (5201600740) (Con/Met)
3 messages

FHS Ethics <fhs.ethics@mq.edu.au>   Tue, Nov 15, 2016 at 1:17 PM
To: TANYA APPLEBY <tanya.appleby@students.mq.edu.au>
Cc: Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan <kerryann.osullivan@mq.edu.au>

Dear Dr O'Sullivan,

Re: "Somewhere Out There: Regional Educators, Professional Learning and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers" (5201600740)

Thank you very much for your response. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee and approval has been granted, effective 15th November 2016. This email constitutes ethical approval only.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan

Mrs Tanya Appleby

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1.   The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2.   Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 15th November 2017

Progress Report 2 Due: 15th November 2018

Progress Report 3 Due: 15th November 2019

Progress Report 4 Due: 15th November 2020

Final Report Due: 15th November 2021

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the

work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/resources

3.   If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Sub-Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4.   All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Sub-Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/managing_approved_research_projects

5.   Please notify the Sub-Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6.   At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/managing_approved_research_projects

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the address below.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Anthony Miller
Chair
Faculty of Human Sciences
Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee

Appendix 2: Ethics Approval (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn)

CATHOLIC EDUCATION
Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

Record No: R360441
Container No: 2014/60

5 December 2016

Ms Tanya Appleby
1 Cohen Street,
GOULBURN NSW 2580

Dear Ms Tanya

I am writing in response to your request to undertake research titled *Regional Educators, Professional Learning and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*

Your request has been approved subject to the following:

1. The Principal gives final permission for research to be carried out in his/her school. This letter of approval should accompany any approach to schools or teachers.

2. If the schools are located in the ACT and the research is qualitative in nature, meaning that contact, however minimal, with a student will occur even if just to visit a classroom, the researcher must apply for and satisfactorily receive a Working With Vulnerable People Background Check prior to conducting the research. The background check required is the one for volunteers which means that there is no cost to the researcher to obtain this check. Please visit the ACT Office of Regulatory Services' website on http://www.ors.act.gov.au/ and click the 'forms' button and the Working With Vulnerable People, Volunteers link to access the registration process for the background check.

3. For research conducted in New South Wales Schools, please go to the NSW 'Working With Children Check' website at https://check.kids.nsw.gov.au and complete in the volunteer declaration. This task will be required by all researchers in NSW regardless of the nature of the research. Applications are free and are submitted electronically.

4. Mrs Williams is to be contacted immediately should your research differ in any way from that proposed.

5. Confidentiality of findings and anonymity of students is adhered to. The research must comply with the requirements of the Commonwealth Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000.

6. That upon completion of your research a copy of your report is forwarded to me.

52 - 54 Franklin Street, Manuka ACT 2603 | 02 62345455
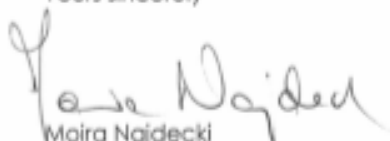PO Box 3317 Manuka ACT 2603 | www.cg.catholic.edu.au

Mrs William's contact details are:

Telephone: (02) 6234 5408
Fax: (02) 6234 5496
Email: maree.williams@cg.catholic.edu.au

Yours sincerely

Moira Najdecki
Director

Appendix 3: Letter of Consent (Principal)

![Macquarie University logo]

Faculty of Human Sciences
Department of Educational Studies
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109

Phone: +61(0) 2 9850 8702
Email: kerryann.osullivan@mg.edu.au
         tanya.appleby@students.mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name & Title: <u>Dr. Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan</u>

Seeking Permission for Research Participation

Project: **Somewhere Out There: Regional Educators, Professional Learning and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.**

Dear Principal,

You are invited to participate in a small case study targeting regional teachers and their engagement with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. The purpose of the study is to explore teacher attitudes towards the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, with regards to how the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* facilitate opportunities for Professional Learning.

The study is being conducted by research student Tanya Appleby to meet the requirements of the Master of Research program under the supervision of Dr Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan, (02) 9850 8702; kerryann.osullivan@mq.edu.au, of the Faculty of Human Sciences, Department of Educational Studies, Macquarie University.

If you give permission for any three members of your school's teaching staff to participate, the following would be required of them. These teachers would be asked to participate separately in a 15-minute semi-structured interview conducted over the phone. This interview would be audio-recorded and transcribed for the purpose of analysis. The phone interview would take place either on your school Site or at another mutually agreeable time and place. This will be followed by an online survey which would and this would be accessed via *SurveyMonkey.*

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual or school will be identified in any publication of the results. Pseudonyms will be use for all individual participants and their schools. Only Tanya Appleby and Dr. Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan will have access to the interview transcripts. All those with access to the transcripts will follow the required ethical protocols and are clear that they are not to pass the

material on without written permission of the participants. A one-page summary of the results of the data will be made available to participants after the final examination of the thesis is completed.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: your school is not obliged to participate and if your teachers decide to participate, they are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

If you do grant permission would you please complete the attached Principal's Consent Form (below) and return to the researchers in the reply paid envelope. I have attached a one-page advertisement to assist in recruiting teachers for this study. Could you please place this in a focal area within your school or email it to your teachers as appropriate.

If you would like to discuss this research further or have any questions, please feel free to contact either of the researchers.

This research has the approval of the Human Ethics Committee of Macquarie University and I have sought approval to conduct this case study from Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

Tanya Appleby

I, (Principal's name) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to my school and staff participating in this research, knowing that we can withdraw from further participating in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Principal's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Principal's Signature: _____   Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature:_____   Date:_____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 4: Letter of Consent (Participant)

Faculty of Human Sciences
Department of Educational Studies
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY   NSW   2109

Phone: +61 (0) 2 9850 8702
Email: kerryann.osullivan@mq.edu.au
         tanya.appleby@students.mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name & Title: Dr. Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan

Participant Information and Consent Form

Project: **Somewhere Out There: Regional Educators, Professional Learning and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.**

You are invited to participate in a study targeting regional teachers and their engagement with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.   The purpose of the study is to explore teacher attitudes towards the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, with regards to how the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* facilitate opportunities for Professional Learning.

The study is being conducted by research student Tanya Appleby to meet the requirements of the Master of Research program under the supervision of Dr Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan, (02) 9850 8702; kerryann.osullivan@mq.edu.au, of the Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Human Sciences, Macquarie University.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in one 30 minute semi-structured interview. The interview will be audio-recorded. If you agree, the interview will take place over the phone (mobile), from either your workplace or another location agreeable to you such as from your home, after school hours through mutual agreement. After completing the phone interview, you will be required to complete an online survey which will be accessed via *SurveyMonkey*. These activities do not need to be completed on the same day. This will approximately take 30 minutes to complete.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Pseudonyms will be use for all individual participants and their schools. Your school will not have access to your responses or to any data collected. Only Tanya Appleby and Dr. Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan will have access to the interview transcripts and survey data. All those with access to the transcripts will follow the required ethical protocols and are clear that they are not to pass the material on without your written permission. A one-page summary of the results of the data will be made available to you after the final examination of the thesis is completed.

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

Regards,

Tanya Appleby

I, (participants name) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____   Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Investigators Signature:_____   Date:_____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (Telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 5: Poster Advertisement

MACQUARIE University
SYDNEY·AUSTRALIA

Take Part in Research for Regional Teachers

What is this research study about?

This study aims to investigate the processes of implementing the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) in the regional NSW school context and explore how teachers interpret these Standards.

Why should I help?

Your involvement in this project will add to a body of research on new understanding of how these Standards are received by teaching profession and, specifically, how they are understood by regional teachers.

Who can take part?

Any qualified teacher may take part in the study irrespective of the numbers of years of teaching service in the profession.

Who is conducting this study?

This study is being conducted by Tanya Appleby under the supervision of Dr. Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan from Macquarie University. Ethics for this research has been approved by Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn.

What will I be asked to do?

The study is made up of 2 parts and requires voluntary participation in:

- a 15-minute interview to be conducted over the phone or skype (no visual)

- an online survey taking no more than 15 minutes to complete in entirety.

Your responses will be digitally recorded and transcribed for the purpose of analysis.

When and where?

Either part of the study can take place at a time that is mutually convenient. Each part of the study may take place over different days or on the same day. This study will commence at the beginning of Term 4, 2016 and conclude at the end of the school year.

Will my responses and identity be kept anonymous?

Any information gathered in the course of the study is confidential, except as required by law. No individual or school will be identified in any publication of the results. Your school will not have access your responses. Only Tanya Appleby (Researcher) and Dr. Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan (Supervisor) will have access to the interview transcripts and survey results.

Participation

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are also free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. If you do grant permission to participate in the study, would you please complete the attached *Participant's Consent Form* and return to the researcher in the reply paid envelope.

Upon receipt of your permission, we will make contact with you at school with further details.

Appendix 6: Interview Script with Semi-Structured Questions

Interview Script

Preamble

Researcher:	Good morning/afternoon/evening (insert name of participant), this is (insert name of researcher).
Researcher:	Do you have approximately 20-30 minutes available for an interview? [Yes/No]
Researcher:	Thank you. [If no- make arrangements for an alternate time and date.]
Researcher:	Can I make an alternate arrangement with you, please? [If yes- continue]
Researcher:	I'm going to ask you a set of questions, the first set of questions will be about the *Standards* and the second set will be about professional learning at your school. Okay?
	If you need me to repeat a question, please just ask.
	I also want you to be aware that I will be taping this interview for the purpose of data collection and that your responses and identity will remain anonymous in the research.
	Do you give permission for me to continue? [Yes/No]

Question 1

Researcher:	**When was the last time that you engaged with the Standards?**
	[Prompt 1: this could be reading through them, being professionally developed in them or working with a colleague on them? Or perhaps, working on them with your accreditation?]
	[Prompt 2- Was this recently? (in the last 2 weeks); Was it some time ago? (In the last month?) What it a long time ago? (Last term or more than 3 months ago); or was it a long time ago? (over 3 months ago); Or never; Or can't remember?

Questions 2 and 3

Researcher: **What do you think is the purpose of the Standards at a school level?**

[*Prompt 3- what do you think they are intended to achieve at school?*]

Researcher: **What do you think is the purpose of the Standards at a national level?**

[*Prompt 4- What do you think is the larger intent or purpose of the Standards for educators?*]

Questions 4, 5, 6 and 7

Researcher: **Does your school adequately prepare you to teach or apply 21st century learning skills which are expressed in the Standards?**

[Yes/No]

Researcher: **How does Professional Learning in this area at your school occur?**

[*Prompt 5- this might be informally as required, or structured learning through professional learning or incidentally as required or through external opportunities or providers who support your professional learning on the Standards.*]

Researcher: **What is the purpose of the classification system within the Standards that describe teachers as "Proficient", "Highly accomplished" and "Leader teacher"? What do these categories suggest to you?**

[*Prompt 6- Do they imply a role? Responsibilities? Skills sets? Career path or direction? Or titles attached to pay or you are not sure or don't know?*]

Researcher: **Is understanding what the Standards mean and how they work a priority for your school? How do you know if it is or if is not?**

[*Prompt 7- is there time set aside for discussion or work on the standards?, are they tabled at meetings? Are they used in professional conversations? Does anyone talk about them?*]

Question 8

Researcher: **In your practice, what role do you think that the Standards play in how you, perceive/see yourself as a professional educator?**

[Prompt 8- Do the standards help or support your professional identity? Do you use the standards to describe your level of competence? How and why?]

Researcher: Thank you for taking part in this interview.

End of Interview

Appendix 7: SurveyMonkey Questions

Survey Questions

Question 1

In your school, is there a formal induction or specific professional learning time allocated to explaining and engaging with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* for:

- Early career teachers   Yes/No

- Casual teachers   Yes/No

- Permanent fulltime/part time teachers   Yes/No

- Temporary Teachers   Yes/No

Question 2(a)

My school provides an induction process on the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* to help me better understand this policy?

Strongly agree   Agree   undecided   disagree   strongly disagree

Questions 2 (b)

I have engaged in professional learning about the purpose of the Standards and this has given me a sound understanding of this policy document.

Strongly agree   Agree   undecided   disagree   strongly disagree

Question 2 (c)

I understand the purpose of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers policy document is for professional accreditation.

Strongly agree   Agree   undecided   disagree   strongly disagree

Question 2 (d)

I understand that the purpose of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers policy document is for benchmarking teacher performance.

Strongly agree   Agree   undecided   disagree   strongly disagree

Question 2 (e)

I understand the purpose of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers is to refine and extend my knowledge, skills and understanding as a professional educator.

Strongly agree   Agree   undecided   disagree   strongly disagree

Question 2 (f)

I know what is expected of me when using and applying the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* to my professional career?

Strongly agree   Agree   undecided   disagree   strongly disagree

Question 2 (g)

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers play an important role in improving my capacity as a teacher.

Strongly agree   Agree   undecided   disagree   strongly disagree

Question 3

How were the *Standards* introduced to you at school?

Question 4

What do you believe is the purpose of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*?

Question 5

How do you use the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* in your professional life?

End of Survey