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## Investigating Mandatory Peer Review Of Teaching In Schools

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*Abstract: Accountability agendas are influencing the secondary education sector in Australian schools. Analysis of student achievement, student feedback mechanisms and personal reflection are forming part of these agendas as methods of teacher evaluation. Additionally, and more recently, teacher evaluation through 'peer review' is emerging as a tool for evaluating teacher quality. Peer review of teaching encompasses educators working and learning together to improve teaching practices and student learning. A plethora of literature currently exists on peer review of teaching for formative purposes. While there are a number of studies examining the role of peer review of teaching within higher education, there are very few studies in the secondary school sector. Furthermore, there are no studies published on the mandatory nature of peer review of teaching. This study critically examined the reasons behind the implementation of mandatory peer review of teaching at a regional high school. Specifically, the study investigated the ways in which mandatory peer review of teaching engaged with an array of discourses, including those of 'professionalism' and 'managerialism.' This study consisted of a case study of a regional secondary school which implemented mandatory peer review of teaching for all teaching staff in 2012. The key method of data collection was interviews with key stakeholders. Analysis of the data indicated that the rationale behind mandatory peer review resides along a continuum of discourses that range from professionalism, quality enhancement and managerialism.*

### Introduction

Peer review of teaching is of great importance to the secondary education sector in Australia. Since 2012, the institution for this study mandated the process of peer review of teaching. It is among the first to change the way in which teaching practices are evaluated. Within a culture of performativity (Apple, 2001; Lingard, 2010), practices residing within the discourse of the neo-liberal state have been a response to current reforms by secondary schools. These reforms centre around notions of accountability, and located within a new policy framework. The policy mantra signalling the introduction of this system by the Queensland government is "United in the pursuit of excellence" (Education Queensland, 2011). Secondary schools have had to rethink the way in which they evaluate the quality of teaching as they are guided by notions of power and marketisation. High stakes testing schemes such as the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an example of the way in which evaluative measures are in focus across the education sector.

Teachers are now externally accountable and are under significant scrutiny. This culture of performativity is also apparent with the creation of websites such as ‘My School’ (<http://www.myschool.edu.au/>) as a means for the wider community to reflect on how schools compare with each other.

## ***Background***

The evaluation of teachers’ work has seen significant growth in the last 40 years in terms of type and quantity. A number of approaches to teacher appraisal in schools have been apparent over the last 40 years. Prior to the 1970’s schools had ‘inspectors’ who penalised teachers for inefficiency, checked standards were met and promoted ‘outstanding’ teachers (Lokan & McKenzie, 1989). It was the inspector’s role to judge the overall standard of teaching and to scrutinise the management and operation of schools (Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004). The inspection process was seen as “detrimental to teachers’ professional development” (Lokan & McKenzie, 1989, p.19) as it “was contrary to the growing professionalism of teachers” (p.33).

Promotional purposes continued to be the primary rationale for teacher evaluation (Lokan & McKenzie, 1989) as systems moved to merit promotion. During the 1970s and 1980s teachers’ eligibility for promotion was assessed using various methods, including the preferred method of having an interview selection panel (Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004). The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence of many reports focused on “the need to improve teacher quality, teacher education and professional development” (Ingvarson, 2010, p. 52). The 1990s saw the development of ‘school evaluation’ and ‘appraisal’ schemes. In the new century, the policy emphasis has been on improved student learning outcomes with a focus on accountability for all Australian states as an indicator for teacher performance (Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004).

As noted, peer review of teaching in secondary education sectors is becoming a popular formative process to evaluate quality teaching. Three trends that have been identified by Collinson, Kozina, Lin, Ling, Matheson, Newcombe and Zogla (2009) are visible in a wide range of countries including Australia, England, Latvia, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Taiwan and the USA. The practices that have been associated with these trends are glocalisation (thinking globally- acting locally), mentoring and re-thinking teacher evaluation. They are intended to advance teachers’ learning and enrich their pedagogy via continuous professional development.

The involvement of reviewing others in a range of ways is defined as peer review by various authors. Peer/teacher evaluation (Collinson, et al., 2009; Koretz, Newcombe, Perlstein, Ravitch & Willingham, 2010) and peer feedback (Bell, 2001; Wilkins & Shin, 2011) are the two most common synonyms for peer review. For the purpose of this study, the term ‘peer review’ will be used.

## **Aims**

The overarching research question was:

- What are the key reasons for the introduction of mandatory peer review in schools?

The enabling research questions were:

- How has mandatory peer review in schools evolved?;
- What are the ‘rules’ of mandatory peer review in schools?;
- What are the perceived benefits of mandatory peer review in schools?; and

- What are the anticipated challenges to the introduction of mandatory peer review of teaching in schools?

## Literature Review

Schools have been experiencing a transformation in the way in which they operate for some time (Hargreaves, 2000; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999; Collinson et al., 2009; Danaher, Gale and Erben, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Lingard, 2010; Marginson 2000; Ory, 1991; Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid & Shacklock, 2000). A shift in the paradigm of professional development of teachers in the last 20 years has seen a change from privatised practices to a model of 'professional learning communities' (Hargreaves, 2000; Rigelman & Ruben, 2012; Stoll, 2010).

"Deprivatizing practice to make teaching public" and "focusing on collaboration" (Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008, p.81) are two characteristics within this model. According to Fullan (2007), teaching practices need to be deprivatised by establishing a community of practice where colleagues collaborate and debate the quality and effectiveness of teaching. Marks and Louis (1999) refer to deprivatisation as the process of revealing individual teaching practices for the examination of peers and administration. Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell and Valentine (1999) discuss that interaction with, and feedback from, peers needs to occur in order for deprivatisation of practice to occur.

According to Wilkins and Shin (2011) the purpose of peer review is "to promote professional development, collaboration and self-assessment" (p. 50). Lomas and Nicholls (2005) ascertain that the emphasis of peer review of teaching should be on personal development. Coaching, mentoring or peer networking is considered by Rhodes and Beneicke (2002) as leading to improvement in practice. Rhodes and Beneicke (2002) also believe that the key motive of peer review should be for personal development and consider collaboration as vital for improving practice. Farrell (2011) and Hargreaves (2000) note that increased collegiality amongst staff could be a result of peer review of teaching as it enhances communication between colleagues.

Although peer review of teaching has been suggested as being used for professional development, schools need to consider that neo-liberalism globally dominates policy settings used by national governments (Marginson, 2000). Markets in education are not a new discourse according to Danaher, Gale and Erben (2000). Marginson (2000) believes that the government affected more than most others by the neo-liberal market ideology is the Australian government. Mechanisms that create evidence of efficiency and effectiveness according to Apple (2001) are required for schools taking on market orientated practices. The 'corporatisation' of educational activities and guaranteeing education is governed as a business to hold a competitive edge are strategies described by Smyth et al. (2000). Substantial administrative and ideological changes transpire as a result, (Smyth et al., 2000), causing an intensification of teachers' work (Apple, 2001; Smyth, 2000). A "blame culture" (Avis, 2005, p.212) is created by marketised strategies, resulting in a culture of performativity. It is via targets and accountability that "members can call to account its members" (p. 212). Various authors ascertain that this marketised influence puts pressure on teachers to perform (Apple, 2001; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999; Danaher, Gale & Erben, 2000).

The growing trend to teacher evaluation associates to a culture of 'performativity,' or constant scrutiny of performance. Lingard (2010) describes policy in education as being "economised" (p.136) in regard to high stakes testing and its educational outcomes. The My School website is an example of this performativity agenda with regard to high stakes testing and its educational effects. Lingard refers to this agenda as almost being the "profession

versus governments” (p.137). Forming part of a larger neo-liberal movement is increased scrutiny on teacher evaluation.

Blackmore (2005) maintains that, the view of quality lies within the ‘customer’. Therefore, as students receive teaching directly, they may be considered to be the customers.

Motivations behind peer review may be a result of a push towards creating better professionals or a competitive edge to increase productivity, and ultimately better educational products, or perhaps, a combination of both. A framework for professional accountability “that understands the roles and relationships of everyone in the education process and what their appropriate responsibilities are” (p.21) is argued by Job (2008) as a vital element for enhancing the roles and responsibilities of all key stakeholders within education. Job (2008) believes this is essential since high level student achievement is correlated with high level teacher professionalism.

The view of Smyth et al. (2000) also supports previous authors, describing teachers’ work worldwide as under intense and immense pressure. Education systems and their purposes are shifting rapidly (Smyth et al. 2000). Also noted by Smyth et al. (2000) is that not only is it the pace of these changes that is crucial, but also the direction and substance.

A review of the literature identified many examples of international mandatory peer review processes taking place in countries such as South Africa (Ed Village, 2012) and the United States of America (Johnson, Fiarman, Munger, Papay, Qazilbash & Wheeler, 2008 ). Whilst there is an array of literature on peer review of teaching in secondary school contexts globally, there is a lack of literature on the context of Australian schools.

## Method

Hereafter, the secondary school which was used for this study is referred to as ‘Trentley High School’, a pseudonym. This research used a critical theory perspective in relation to neo-liberalism. In particular, it focused on the marketisation of schools and teachers’ work. Critical theory is used to examine who is exercising power with regards to the mandatory implementation of peer review of teaching. In doing this, the analysis draws upon understandings from key critical theorists, Smyth, Dow, Hattman, Reid and Shacklock (2002) and Apple (2001). Apple (2001) discusses the development of democratic schools and the connection between education and power. Smyth et al. (2000) are Australian critical theorists who discuss the effects that a globalising economy has on teachers work. These effects include marketisation, performativity and intensification of teachers’ work, which are all reflective of an increasingly neo-liberal state.

The data is drawn from a school in a regional Australian city. Trentley High School had 648 students enrolled in 2011 with 61 teaching staff. Trentley High School implemented mandatory peer review of teaching for all teaching staff for the first time in 2012. In the context of Trentley High School, peer review of teaching involves teaching staff engaging in the process of peer review at least three times within the year. The first round of peer review, in semester one, involved working with another teacher from their own faculty/department. The second round, during semester two, involved staff working with peers from a different faculty. The third round also in semester two, involved a head of department from their faculty conducting a review. Individuals are also invited to ask a member of the administration team to observe them teach.

At Trentley High School, the outcome of peer review remains between the two staff members involved and is not relayed to anyone else for any other purposes unless permission is granted from the reviewee. Trentley High School’s peer review of teaching is focused on teaching strategies and their impact on learning. The teacher who is reviewed nominates which teaching strategies they want to be observed using. The observer focuses on explicit links between teaching strategies employed and student learning outcomes, which are

measured by students work samples. The review is a cyclic process involving the following steps: Pre-meeting; Classroom observation; Student work (reviewer examines students' work for a link between teaching strategies and student outcomes); Post-meeting; Development plan and Student voice (student surveys) (Trentley High School Principal, personal communication, July 18, 2012). Figure 1 outlines the process for peer review of teaching implemented at Trentley High School. Further information on this process is attached in Appendix 1.

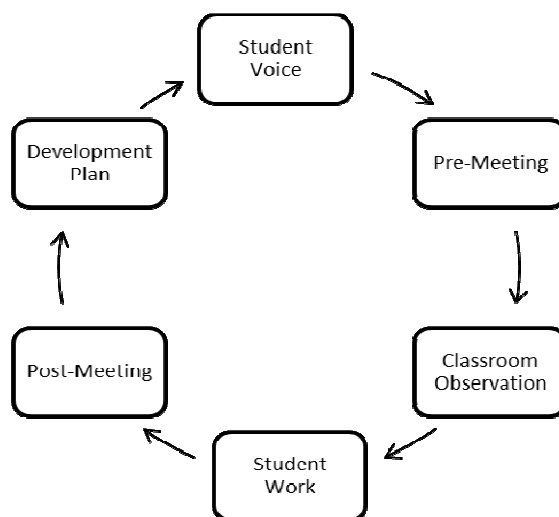


Figure 1. The peer review of teaching process at Trentley High School

## Interviews

In qualitative research, the most common method of data collection is the interview (Lichtman, 2006). Obtaining the descriptions and interpretations of others is a key principle of case study research (Stake, 1995). A number of authors note that critical theory methods tend to rely on dialogic methods and therefore promote interviews that allow for conversation and reflection (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Data was collected via semi-structured interviews. Fontana and Frey (1994) describe semi-structured interviews as one of the “most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings” (p.361). As a result, the interviewer was able to ask open ended questions and further ask the interviewee to explain answers and comments (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006). Via the use of open ended questions the interviewee also had an opportunity to describe their experiences and voice their opinions about peer review of teaching without being influenced by the interviewer’s perspectives (Creswell, 2012). The promotion of dialogic purposes outlined above aligns to a critical perspective and therefore influenced the decision to use semi-structured interviews.

One-on-one interviews are a common approach in educational research as noted by Creswell (2012). This study conducted one interview with three key stakeholders from Trentley High School. The interviews lasted thirty minutes and were conducted during work hours. To allow for a detailed record of the interview for later transcription and analysis the interviews were audio recorded. The nature of the semi-structured interviews permitted the interviewer to modify the wording of the questions depending on the role and answers of the interviewee. When necessary, participants were asked for more information, elaboration and clarification of answers. Interviewing was chosen as the method of data collection to elicit more detailed information on how the interviewees are positioned by the over-arching

paradigms of the neo-liberal state and professionalism (Kervin, et al. 2006). Each of the interview questions were linked to a research question. Table 1 shows the link between the research questions and key interview questions.

Research Question	Interview Question
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the ‘rules’ of mandatory peer review?</li> </ul>	What do you understand to be the process for peer review at _____?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the key reasons for the introduction of mandatory peer review?</li> </ul>	Describe, from your understanding, the background to the introduction of peer review at _____?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did mandatory peer review evolve?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the perceived benefits of mandatory peer review?</li> </ul>	From the _____perspective what do you see as the central aim of peer review?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the anticipated challenges to the introduction of mandatory peer review of teaching?</li> </ul>	

**Table 1. Interview Questions**

## Participants

Participants were sourced based on their role at the institution. Teachers were provided with an information sheet about the study and were asked to express their interest in taking part, only male teachers responded. The principal and union spokesperson were each contacted via email seeking their participation in the process. Pseudonyms have been used. ‘Steven’ is the Principal; Thomas is the union spokesperson and Nicholas is a teacher. The participants were selected based on some important considerations. Firstly, the teacher was selected because the teacher was experiencing the process of peer review. The union spokesperson was selected because the person represented staff interests more broadly. Finally, the principal was chosen as he is leading the inclusion of mandatory peer review of teaching. All of the participants were male. This study was a small scale research project conducted over a one year timeframe and therefore had a small sample size.

## Data Analysis

To analyse the data thematic analysis was used. As an analytical tool, thematic analysis is “a useful and flexible method for qualitative research” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.77). Boyatzis (1998) describes thematic analysis as “a process for encoding qualitative information” (p. vi). Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyse and report patterns and themes emerging from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After transcribing the interviews, transcripts were read and notes were made. Themes emerging from the transcripts were then highlighted, informed by a critical analysis of the literature.

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe a theme as capturing something important about the data relative to the research question which “represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p.82). After establishing key themes within the data, an investigation about how these themes reflect or differ from experiences documented in the literature was completed. Included within the analysis is how the findings position peer review of teaching in the over-arching paradigms of the neo-liberal state and professionalism.

## Results

Analysis of the interview data revealed a number of underlying and common themes evolving from the neo-liberal state. These themes spanned the literature as outlined by Smyth et al. (2000) and Apple (2001), engaging with discourses of power, marketisation, professionalism and collegiality.

An issue that emerged from the interview data is that peer review of teaching was mandated as a response 'from above.' When analysing the data, it was found that some participants commented on the imposition of policies as impacting on the mandatory implementation of peer review of teaching. Drawing on a critical perspective this 'call from the top' is linked to the exercising of power within a managerial framework (Apple, 2001; Smyth et al., 2000) and linked to the performativity agenda.

The performativity agenda is playing a key role in schools at present. Without any clear articulation of the mandate for peer review in the school's documents, the principal of Trentley High, Steven, justified his decision to move towards mandatory peer review of teaching by drawing on Education Queensland's improvement agenda *United in our Pursuit of Excellence (2011)*. *United in our Pursuit of Excellence (2011)* is a key policy agenda driving improvement for Education Queensland at this point in time. Steven's comments are frequently aligned to the improvement agenda, as he often mentioned the need to build teacher capacity. He cited Education Queensland's policy as influencing the decision for the implementation of mandatory peer review. He discussed how he is working with teachers to boost their pedagogical practice by providing professional development. This professional development is on peer review of teaching and the impact it can have on pedagogy. Teachers are equipped with the resources that they need, including time, and focus on the use of evidence based decision making in their classrooms (Education Queensland, 2011).

*I suppose it came about 2 years ago - the director general stood up Julia Grantham, and said 'look we need principals to be instructional leaders' ... she unpacked what an instructional leader is and one of the key things was about principals taking on that leadership role of this is what teaching and pedagogical practice looks like in our classrooms and the whole school has a very clear understanding of what the expectations are. The next step then is about the principal getting in and seeing that actually happening in the classroom. I think that is the key, you can do all the – as much talking and banging all guns together but unless you actually see that happening in the classroom where the principal can get in and see that happening in the classroom providing that feedback back to the teachers. So with that aspect I then started to research around what are some of the practices that we can adopt- we looked at a couple of different ones and I adopted one from there and we actually adapted it to suit our particular context here in this school (Steven, 18/07/2012).*

When Steven was asked what he believed to be the central aim of peer review, his comments again reflected the *United in our Pursuit of Excellence (2011)* improvement agenda.

*It's about building capacity within the staff right across the whole school, so for the teacher being observed it's about whether those teaching strategies are actually achieving the learning outcomes that they had anticipated and had planned for and getting feedback from a peer around that. The other side of the coin is where the peer will actually be able to see, or the observer will actually see peers teach and think 'gee; there are some great teaching strategies that I haven't thought of, I'll grab those'. So it's about building capacity in one fowl swoop (Steven, 18/07/2012).*

Steven's comments suggest he is driving the improvement agenda forward, investing in improving the skills and knowledge of his workforce – 'the capacity.' As a result, mandatory peer review of teaching has been implemented at the school. The program aims to



achieve increased capacity across the school. With improvement agendas in place, secondary schools have had to buy into these narrow measures of accountability.

A second major issue to emerge from the interview data was deprivatisation. In this regard, analysis of the data indicated that peer review could be a means to deprivatise teaching practice and emphasize professional learning communities. Two characteristics within this model are “deprivatizing practice to make teaching public” and “focusing on collaboration” (Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008, p.81). Although this shift is occurring and the acknowledgement of the powerful nature of professional collaboration has become wide spread, Rigelman and Ruben (2012), note that the norm for the majority of school teachers is to remain working in isolation. Nicholas, a teacher at Trentley High School, reiterated this individualistic focus.

*I mean, teachers by nature are [a] very reclusive I suppose ‘creature’. People don’t like others coming into their classroom – ‘that’s my environment’ (Nicholas, 22/08/2012).*

The comment made by Nicholas is not reflective of his own personal practice. In fact, he was very open to the idea of peer review of teaching.

*... just things that you don’t see, that others do that I found to be very very very helpful...I think it’s all about sharing and that’s part of the reason why it’s become mandatory (Nicholas, 22/08/2012).*

Rigelman and Ruben (2012) conducted a study on collaborative models for teacher professional learning. From this study, they described the professional development of the teaching candidates as learning through shared success and failure, by opening their classroom doors and experiences to one another and deprivatising their practice. Steven, the principal of Trentley High School, appeared to agree with this view. Steven believes that by deprivatising practice, teachers are able to build their capacity by sharing experiences with one another. His comment below highlighted the effect he believes it will have on his school.

*This is the best way to build teachers capacity. It is about learning from each other, getting in and seeing each other teach...I think we will see that this will move even bigger when we start to go into the different faculties this semester... I think that’s where we’re going to see this build and snowball into an even bigger program...it starts to build that collegiality amongst the staff, that we do learn from each other...this process is now about sharing...rather than having a privatised practice where everyone works on their own solo, those four walls that no one else comes into (Steven, 18/07/2012).*

Steven continued to highlight the benefits of teachers sharing their successes and failures, as indicated in the following comment.

*The more that you can get teachers talking about the pedagogy and about their teaching processes the more you are going to build their skill base, you don’t want to just rely on one aspect, this is just another string to the bow, so it is teachers having the opportunity to talk in a whole range of different modes and settings around their teaching strategies (Steven, 18/07/2012).*

These comments are grounded in the existing literature. Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell and Valentine (1999) note that deprivatisation of practice, a critical component of professional communities, requires interaction with, and feedback from, peers in order for continuous reflection and improvement of practice. Marks and Louis (1999) discuss deprivatisation of practice as “teachers expos[ing] their own teaching to scrutiny by peers and administration in order to improve” (p.735). It is evident from the above excerpts that Steven, the principal from Trentley High School has mandated peer review of teaching in a desire to deprivatise teaching practice.

Yet the notion of deprivatised practice is already commonplace according to the union spokesperson’s views on the need for mandatory peer review. The union spokesperson

interviewed believed teachers are already 'open door' workers. The representative does not endorse peer review as a mandatory process because he believes that teachers are already sharing and collaborating. The spokesperson's view is that teachers do not require an invitation to enter each other's work environments and that many staff members are already undertaking an informal form of peer review.

*I always find that if teachers are experiencing major problems with class they will certainly ask... What we are doing there [peer review] it's not overly necessary I don't think within this school. For some schools – for some teachers they might work in more isolation and then really resent people coming through their door and having a look at what they are doing – I think there is a whole grade of things there (Thomas, 14/06/2012).*

The uncertainty of not knowing what the peer review is to be used for reflects the adage that Nicholas, the teacher at Trentley High School, used.

*One of the issues that came up was 'what exactly is the peer review process going to be used for?' is it going to be used as a 'stick' or a 'carrot.' Is it a stick to beat the teacher that doesn't quite perform the way other teachers do? Is it a carrot to have high performing teachers allowed to 'strut their stuff' so to speak? (Nicholas, 22/08/2012).*

A key theme that emerged from the interview data was that this particular educational institution is running like a business. Analysis of the interview data revealed corporate style principles and practices are influencing the work of teachers. The governance structure of Australian schooling has been redefined over the last 40 years by consecutive federal and state governments. This redefining has seen a shift towards principles of the market and the term 'managerialism' has emerged (O'Brien & Down, 2002; Hartley, 1997; Marginson, 2000; Robertson, 2000). This policy shift is likely to have a huge impact on Queensland secondary schools.

Nicholas, the teacher at Trentley High School, has also felt the impact of the corporate shift. As O'Brien and Down (2002) note, the dominant style of public administration and service focuses on outcomes, results and achieving more with less. This structural and ideological shift in the education sector is apparent in the corporate style of operating. For Nicholas, this is evident when he commented about outcomes and results in relation to NAPLAN testing.

*...It is all designed around improving data more or less. The implementation of NAPLAN and those sorts of tests have shown that there are some things that are lacking. Not just in individual schools it's across the state and peer review is something that obviously 'the powers that be' have decided might be something that can address that... It is no secret that I suppose teaching at the moment is a profession that is highly scrutinised. You have a lot of push to link performance and results to the monetary aspect of teaching (Nicholas, 22/08/2012).*

Nicholas reflects the view of Apple (2001) who states that unfortunately the most common method for measuring the success of school reform is to examine the results of standardised achievement tests. Nicholas mentions that standardised tests such as NAPLAN inform schools and teachers of aspects which are lacking. From this data they put practices and strategies in place in order to try and increase the results and therefore show 'success.' Apple (2001) argues that it is not enough to accept the most widely used measure of success. It is important to question reforms, such as peer review of teaching, as to what their purpose is, how they can improve the school as a whole, and how the participants within the school are impacted, including teachers, students, community members, parents and administrators.

From a critical perspective, it is important to ask whose interests are best served with the implementation of a process like peer review. In other words, with whom or where does the power lie? Thomas' comments also reflect that peer review of teaching at the school operates to reinforce a more corporate style of operation.

*At the moment it's accountable that we do it and that we are ticked off in the box to say that we definitely did it...If you're running a business you need to have some way of checking on your workers (Thomas, 14/06/2012).*

Analysis of the data from the interviews revealed a common challenge discussed by stakeholders was the issue of time and a concern regarding an increased workload. Apple (2001) argues that teachers are experiencing an intensification of work rather than increased autonomy and professionalism. This view is reflective of the interviewees, who experienced pressure from the introduction of peer review of teaching by adding to workloads. The union spokesperson from Trentley High School, Thomas, held the following view.

*I wouldn't believe in it becoming compulsory. Because certain teachers think that it is time consuming...To me, peer review - I think it unsettles a lot of teachers too...I've got to do that damn thing, geez are you available-we have got to get time off to do it...To increase teacher workload you have got to be super careful...It's a little bit like the adage - the final straw that breaks the camel's back...We are loaded up and up and up (Thomas, 14/06/2012).*

In contrast to the research by Cosser (1998) and the views of the union spokesperson, the teacher found time and workload involved in peer review to be less of a concern. The following comment from the teacher, Nicholas, evidences this view.

*Some people might see it as adding more work. I like to see it as not replacing a wheel, just sort of putting some air in the tyres. I mean, I have gotten a lot out of it personally...I have never found it to be time consuming as such (Nicholas, 22/08/2012).*

The teacher participant was the only interviewee who failed to mention the issue of time until asked about their opinion on the matter. This participant is at the forefront of the peer review process but did not seem concerned with the issue of time or the pressure of an increased workload. The union spokesperson is in place to be representative of staff interests, yet when the teacher was asked to outline any issues they saw in the implementation of peer review as a whole, no concerns were indicated.

*Myself personally I suppose I don't have any real issues (Nicholas, 22/08/2012).*

The principal of Trentley High School also found the teachers were taking a proactive approach towards their role in the process, asking if they can provide feedback when it suits them.

*Can we provide feedback when it suits rather than waiting for that particular allocated time?' So teachers are taking that on as a pro-active step (Steven, 18/07/2012).*

The concern on the issue of time is crucial because it was raised primarily from the union spokesperson who represents the interests of all the teachers. This is noteworthy due to the way peer review has been implemented. As Trentley High School participant Nicholas and principal Steven mentioned a generous amount of time is allocated to staff for processes involving peer review, at staff and curriculum meetings. The teachers were also released from class to go and observe other teachers. Gosling (2002) states that peer review requires structure, with time allocated for the pre- observation and post-observation sessions. At Trentley High School, this is the case.

*...we built it into a staff meeting so it wasn't extra time for the teacher...The released time has come as 'thank god', otherwise you would have been asking teachers to go during one of their spares and of course that makes it a bit tough... (Steven, 18/07/2012).*

*I find that the school gives us a lot of time to implement things in our own curriculum time (Nicholas, 22/08/2012).*

The use of such phrases as “efficiency” and “productivity” align to a marketised view of teachers’ work. While acknowledging further intensification of work through the introduction of peer review of teaching, the reward, or investment, is seen to be worthwhile. McKenzie, Pelliccione and Parker (2008) have already noted that to increase the likelihood of teaching staff partaking in peer review of teaching on an ongoing basis, the process needs to be examined to ensure it is manageable within teachers’ time constraints. Bolt and Atkinson (2010) also argue that the support and voluntary nature of peer review of teaching, in conjunction with an appreciation of workload issues, will determine whether or not it is a viable program to be mandated.

## Summary

This study aimed to explore the rationale behind the implementation of mandatory peer review. The interview data presented noted various responses to the compulsory process and indicated that the rationale for the introduction of mandatory peer review of teaching cannot be explained easily. Interview data revealed that Trentley High School has no framing documents for mandatory peer review of teaching and as a result the principal has drawn on Education Queensland’s improvement agenda *United in our Pursuit of Excellence (2011)*. The interview data indicated a strong alignment with the policy and the implementation of mandatory peer review. The teacher at the secondary school also demonstrated his knowledge of the policy and the impact it is having on the school by drawing on key phrases from the document, for instance, “the capacity” and “instructional leaders”.

The dominant market paradigm shaping educational institutions (Smyth et al., 2000; Apple, 2001) is obvious in the interview data. The teacher indicated that at Trentley High School corporatised practices are in place, resulting in the educational institution running like a business. The teacher noted this as the rationale for implementing mandatory peer review. For instance, “it is about quality control and making sure that what we are doing is correct,” “it is all designed around improving data,” and “showing evidence that your work is high quality.”

Responses from the teacher align with accountability agendas that are influenced by quality and regulatory processes such as My School. The union representative felt very concerned with the managerial forces that could explain the introduction of mandatory peer review of teaching. He held strong opinions on peer review of teaching and was very concerned with the process of intensifying teachers’ work. It was revealed that whilst the Principal was aware of the issue of time and increased workload, there was no major concerns about peer review as a burdensome process. The school principal identified that staff were proactively partaking in the process.

Deprivatising teaching practice was a major theme emerging from the interview data and a significant explanation in relation to the rationale for mandatory peer review. All interviewees made reference to this. The union spokesperson expressed the view that peer review of teaching is an unnecessary process for deprivatising practice. He views teachers as already ‘open door’ workers and very responsive to peer review of teaching. He indicated that the process is not only beneficial but crucial in the deprivatisation of teaching practice. The Principal spoke positively of the peer review of teaching process as a means of deprivatising practice. The principal of Trentley High School drew on his knowledge of influential literature.

## Conclusions

A qualitative case study exploring the key reason behind the implementation of mandatory peer review of teaching revealed a range of views about the reasons behind the mandatory implementation of peer review. This study drew on critical theorists' conceptualisations of teachers' work and the struggles around that work in a neo-liberal environment. The themes of the data have been conceptualised from this paradigm. Key findings from the interviews are illustrative of a range of discourses varying along a continuum of professionalism to managerialism. Individuals being asked to deprivatise their teaching practices could categorise peer review of teaching as an act of deliberate collaborative professionalism (Hargreaves, 2000; Marks & Louis, 1999; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell & Valentine, 1999; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008) in order to improve teaching quality and student success by collaboratively working together (Hargreaves, 2000).

From the interview data, it is evident that Trentley High School has implemented mandatory peer review of teaching as a means of deprivatising teaching practices with each participant making reference to the topic. The way in which the participants responded to this theme is significant to note. The importance of sharing practices with colleagues was indicated by each participant. However, in the union spokespersons opinion peer review of teaching will not promote deprivatisation of practices because in his view this is already occurring. Trentley High School also referred to the process as a developmental tool.

Peer review of teaching may have also been introduced as a means to enhance quality that will result in a positive change for teaching staff involved (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). Trentley High School also made reference to a key policy agenda that is driving improvement in Education Queensland at present. *United in our Pursuit of Excellence (2011)* indicates that the capacity of teachers can be improved by principals becoming instructional leaders. It is envisioned that this leadership will help improve teaching quality and therefore school results.

The rationale for peer review of teaching may also be described as a tool of surveillance consistent with a more managerial rationale, related to more market orientated practices (Smyth et al., 2000; Apple, 2001; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999; Danaher, Gale & Erben, 2000), performativity (Apple, 2001; Lingard, 2010), increased scrutiny and running schools as if they were businesses (Smyth et al., 2000). Data analysis revealed notions and key discourses that reside within the neo-liberal state. Data has indicated that Trentley High School is conforming to marketised practices that evolve from the neo-liberal state (Smyth et al., 2000; Apple, 2001). Responses from the interviewees reflected this dominant discourse of the market. Figure 2 reveals the discourses that peer review of teaching intersects with.

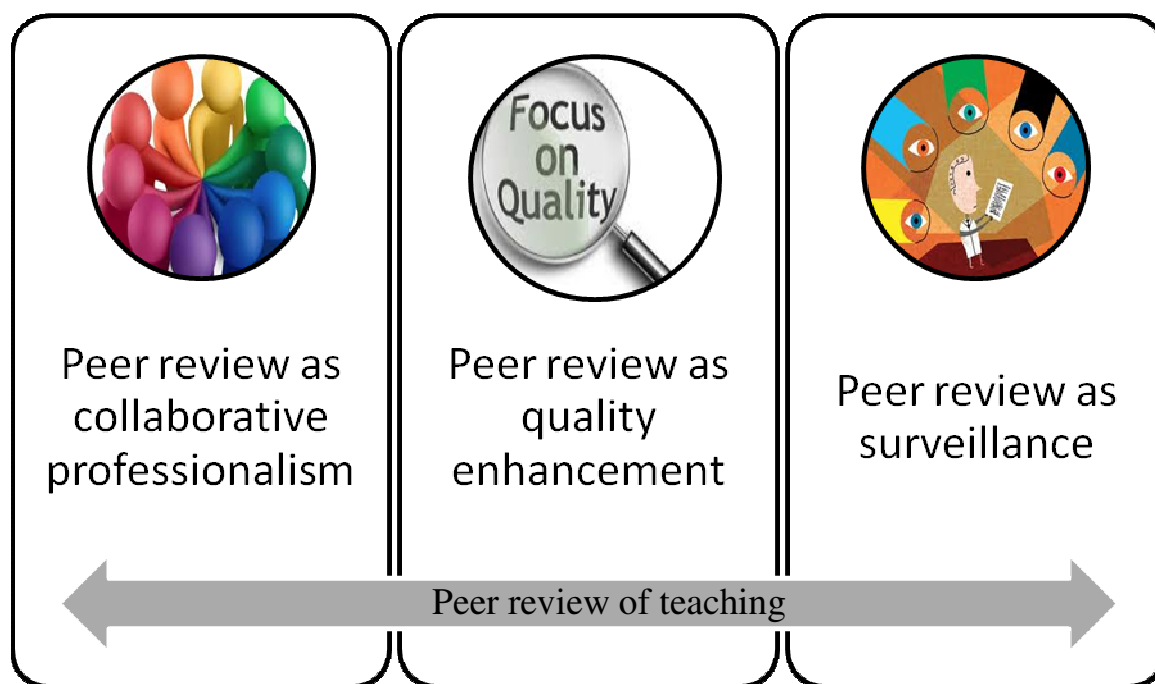


Figure 2. Continuum of discourses

The evolution of peer review of teaching has evolved at Trentley High School under a process characterised by a lack of guiding documents despite some attention being given to a key policy agenda that is driving improvement in Education Queensland at present (*United in our Pursuit of Excellence (2011)*). The 'rules' of mandatory peer review at Trentley High School involve an allocation of allotted time and involve teachers also deciding what 'aspects' are reviewed, and only in relation to classroom teaching practices. The reviewer must see a link between teaching practices and student learning outcomes. Trentley High School follows a cyclical process for peer review of teaching.

Identified within the data are a number of benefits resulting from participation in the peer review process. Firstly, is the deprivatisation of teaching practices, Nicholas, the teacher at the High School, expressed benefits of the process stating that "*just things that you don't see, that others do that I found to be very very very helpful...*"

Secondly, the process is improving collegiality and at Trentley High School teachers have been found to be taking on a pro-active approach. In conjunction with these benefits there was one main challenge identified, and that was the issue of time. It is interesting to note though, the mixed responses to this issue as the union spokesperson found the process to be a real impediment on teachers' workload, however the teachers themselves did not identify any issues with time.

The rising economically oriented perspective on education leads to what Apple (2001) describes as an intensification of teachers' work. The data indicated that peer review of teaching intensifies teachers' workloads and therefore the findings of this study augment Apple's (2001) view. How can the process of peer review of teaching be sustained if there is not enough time is a crucial question to ask. The findings of this study indicated that Trentley High School has provided opportunities for teachers to participate in the peer review of teaching process in meetings and are allocated release time. Key participants noted that having allocated time for the process was a huge positive.

Within a culture of performativity and having introduced mandatory peer review, teachers are going to have to be 'on the ball.' Processes such as mandatory peer review of teaching are in place due to the marketised culture that educators are exposed to and are experiencing. With accountability agendas in place and mechanisms such as NAPLAN, educators work is under constant scrutiny and surveillance. It would seem that peer review of

teaching could be another mechanism to 'check-up' on teachers to ensure they are performing to a 'desired' quality for business.

It is interesting to note the way in which schools are generally governed. The teaching profession is predominately female with male leaders. In this instance, both the manager and union representative are male. The union representative voiced his view that peer review of teaching could only be a means of managerialism. A study investigating the way in which females and males view the peer review of teaching process could be conducted. Likewise, a study that investigates both female and male leaders' view on the peer review of teaching process could be carried out. It is envisaged that by doing so, future studies may be able to provide a sense of the impact females or males would have on such a process.

This study was aimed at providing a better understanding of peer review of teaching and professional enactment, as well as actively contributing to the knowledge of teacher evaluation. This study could be used as a barometer on enablers, constraints and good practice for other sites seeking the implementation of peer review of teaching. However, due to the having a limited number of informants, the findings from the research are hard to apply to other secondary schools in general. Stake (1995) notes that a sample of only a few cases is unlikely to be a strong representation of others. Having said this, formal peer review processes in secondary schools in Queensland are a relatively new phenomena and research of the kind presented in this small scale study can be used effectively by administrators and teachers alike.

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## Appendix 1

### Process of Peer Review of Teaching at Trentley High School

