

ABN 29 002 677 750

Office address: 3B Smalls Road Ryde NSW 2112

Phone (02) 9886 7786 Fax (02) 9886 7673 Email [admin@ebe.nsw.edu.au](mailto:admin@ebe.nsw.edu.au) [www.ebe.nsw.edu.au](http://www.ebe.nsw.edu.au)

## **Submission to 2016 Review of the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) by Economics and Business Educators NSW**

Economics and Business Educators NSW (EBE NSW) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the 2016 Review of the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) commissioned by the NSW Minister for Education by providing the following submission in response to the Review's Terms of Reference and the Issues Paper ( 31 March 2016).

EBE NSW is an established and highly respected professional teacher association representing and supporting teachers of the BOSTES NSW Economics, Business Studies, Legal Studies and Commerce courses. Our members come from government and non-government schools. Our three strategic pillars are professional growth, networking and advocacy (see the EBE NSW website for the full EBE NSW Strategic Plan 2015 - 2017). EBE NSW is an affiliate member of the umbrella national subject association, Business Educators Australasia Inc., and a member of the Professional Teachers' Council NSW (the coordination and consultancy body for professional teacher associations in NSW). Through membership of PTC NSW, EBE NSW is accredited to provide professional learning at all career stages (proficient, highly accomplished and lead) of the Australian Professional Teaching Standards.

### **Areas for discussion**

#### **1. Have the opportunities of the amalgamation been fully realised?**

EBE NSW supports the recognition of the interdependence of curriculum, teaching, assessment and educational regulation through the amalgamation of the previous Board of Studies and the Institute of Teachers. At times the movement of staff has been problematic and unstable affecting relationships with external key stakeholders. Clearer roles and responsibilities are needed and these need to be clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

Unfortunately, coinciding with the amalgamation was a reduction in the support provided to teachers with the cutting of curriculum inspectors. At a time when implementation of new syllabuses would require more support and liaison with schools and associations such as ours – there was less. How a reduction in inspectors could assist with cultivating and enhancing interrelationships between the educational pillars is hard to envisage and therefore it is no surprise to our Association that we have seen no enhancement of teacher professional development in respect to teachers being supported to better “Know the content and how to teach it” or “Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning”. These are areas of professional development that our members typically seek and we support but which we would expect to be able to seek advice and support from BOSTES subject specialists.

It is imperative that BOSTES is properly resourced to be able to effectively manage the expanded system of teacher accreditation. There needs to be more of an emphasis on supporting teachers to achieve the standards and helping them progress on a path of continuous improvement, in addition to monitoring and measuring teacher performance.

There are further opportunities BOSTES could take advantage of to leverage high standards in education by strengthening the representative structure of BOSTES by increasing and enhancing the role of teacher practitioners in curriculum, teaching, assessment and educational regulation matters (both as members of the Board of Directors and as employees in the operations function of the organisation) and through greater representation on the Quality Teaching Council. This would help to realise more deeply the goals in the NSW Government's "Great Teaching, Inspired Learning: A Blueprint for Action" (GTIL) policy.

## **2. Are roles and responsibilities clear and appropriate?**

Although there is a changed national educational environment, each state and territory has their own context and needs which national education architecture from Canberra cannot fully meet and indeed could easily ignore at the expense of student learning outcomes. Our Association sees the role of BOSTES as vital. The interpretation of Australian Curriculum into NSW syllabuses by BOSTES following consultation with NSW teachers, parents and other stakeholders has been absolutely vital in supporting educational standards in NSW and ensuring teachers have high quality curriculum documents they can work with.

There is some confusion as to who has the responsibility to support teachers to implement the syllabuses produced by BOSTES. In the past sectors gave support to their teachers and had funds to do so. This resulted in support being inequitable with levels and quality of support varying. Areas of overlap and duplication have occurred with regards to teaching and learning resources and professional development modules, produced by the NSW Department of Education, being only made available to government schools with non-government schools denied access to these resources (e.g. non – government school teachers and students unable to access websites where these resources are located) leaving them to produce similar resources or do without them to the detriment of students. As BOSTES syllabuses taught in government schools are also taught in non-government schools and as the NSW Education Minister is the Minister for all schools in NSW, procedures need to be put in place where all teachers in all schools in NSW are able to access teaching and learning resources produced by the NSW Government.

Our position is that BOSTES should have carriage of this responsibility and should work with professional teachers' associations and other providers that do not discriminate on whether teachers needing support are from government or non-government schools.

This confusion also applies to the support offered to teachers with regards to applying the Australian Professional Teaching Standards to the development of their careers. Ultimately this should be the responsibility of BOSTES which should have sufficient expert personnel to deliver support equitably. Partnerships with professional teacher associations can be developed to assist BOSTES to fulfil this responsibility. The increased focus on quality teaching should be most evident through the BOSTES role in improving skills and practice through adequate provision of professional development rather than only assessing existing levels of expertise.

### **3. Are processes and practices as effective and efficient as possible?**

There is duplication in the submission and storage of data with regards to professional learning. This has led to misunderstandings and errors in the movement of data from one platform to another. BOSTES and the sectors need to develop a more efficient and effective system to record the professional learning of teachers so teachers can manage this aspect of the Australian Professional Teaching Standards in a way which does not unnecessarily use up time that could be better utilised to increase student learning outcomes.

The BOSTES website needs a significant reworking. It takes an unreasonable length of time for teachers to upload their evidence. As more and more teachers participate in the accreditation process, a significant investment is needed with regards to improving the website. Unnecessary inefficiencies such as these take time away from preparing high-quality lessons.

There have been a number of partnerships identified in GTIL that have not been fully explored, developed and facilitated. Teacher associations like EBE NSW have been identified in the policy as key stakeholders in the provision of professional learning across the state. Our association has the expertise to deliver subject specific, classroom focused and cost effective professional learning. However we do not believe that we have been fully recognized, supported and utilised in relation to the goals in GTIL (for example, "recognise and share outstanding practice"). It is not enough for BOSTES to produce syllabuses and send them out to schools to be taught. Professional learning provided through teacher associations needs to be supported and utilised in order to have a high-performing education system which will improve student results.

In the past, in regional and rural areas, the BOSTES Liaison Officers were the direct link and support for schools in terms of curriculum requirements, assessment and reporting policies and they were always in demand in schools. Recently, their role has fundamentally changed. No longer are they regularly available to go to schools or meet with a network of schools. Their time seems to be taken up with checking and supporting school review processes. They are not as accessible as they use to be. This important resource and service has been limited for regional and rural schools who already suffer from a lack of resources when it comes to implementing the syllabuses produced by BOSTES. This situation creates significant barriers with regards to the effective implementation of the NSW Government's "Rural and Remote Education: A Blueprint for Action" policy.

There has been a decline in the quality and the usefulness of the BOSTES "Notes from the Marking Centre" based on each HSC examination which have traditionally been a high level source of support for HSC teachers. The comments now contain less detail. It is common for the notes to offer only a couple of statements per question in areas candidates need to improve in. For some questions there are no comments related to the need for improvement which could give the impression that all candidates received full marks. The comments are therefore not as constructive in the advice they provide to students and teachers. Some comments are generic and do not reflect the particular intent of the specific question in terms of knowledge, understandings and skills. The utility of the notes is far less than was previously the case. In the past they were a key document for teachers and students to refer to.

#### **4. Are effective governance arrangements in place?**

Teacher associations have been identified throughout GTIL as a key stakeholder in the provision of professional learning across the state. At present there is no representation for teacher associations like EBE NSW on the previously established Office of the Board of Studies Board of Directors even though they have peak status under GTIL. EBE NSW believes that with the amalgamation of BOSTES and the NSW Institute of Teachers there is an opportunity to revamp the structure of the Board of governance of BOSTES to one which is reflective of the directions of education in NSW. EBE NSW requests there are representatives of teacher associations on the Board so that they can give voice to subject specific, classroom focused and cost effective professional learning across all sectors, from K – 12.

It is also imperative that teachers are represented on all syllabus writing and review committees as well as all examination committees so as to ensure student centred teaching and learning practices occur in our schools.

BOSTES is at risk of reduced efficacy without teacher representation as a centre piece of its operations. Teachers are experts in a wide variety of areas from the children they teach, the subject matter they teach, how to teach the subject matter to school children and the ways schools operate in a variety of situations. This level of expertise is critical for BOSTES in order for the organisation to operate in the best interests of children in NSW.

EBE NSW is very concerned about the reduction of curriculum experts with teaching backgrounds at BOSTES. In particular, the large number of syllabuses that sit under a single area and that fall under the responsibility of a single inspector at BOSTES NSW is problematic in terms of effective and efficient management, development of support documentation and implementation at the classroom level. For example the Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) learning area has been cut to one inspector managing 16 secondary HSIE syllabuses as well as the HSIE learning area for K-6.

This has resulted in a lot of these responsibilities being devolved to the sector level without the required level of resources needed to fulfil these responsibilities so teachers are adequately supported in the classroom to effectively implement syllabuses for their students. In addition small independent schools have particularly suffered from a lack of resources in this area.

Stakeholders such as teachers and parents look to BOSTES NSW as the authority when it comes to curriculum matters as BOSTES is responsible for the syllabuses that are taught in schools. It is therefore critical that there are appropriate personnel at BOSTES NSW who are experts for each syllabus and able to address questions and matters of concern.

In addition, there is also a lack of education experts in the old NSW Institute of Teachers department with time poor teachers finding it hard to access educators to assist them re their accreditation requirements.

### **Consultation period**

The consultation period for this Review has been problematic. The Review was announced on 10 March 2016. Written submissions opened on the 18 March 2016. The Issues Paper was released on 31 March 2016. Written submissions closed on 21 April 2016 during the end of Term 1 school holidays. Unfortunately timeframes such as these are not conducive to heavily promoting the Review and wide and deep consultation, making it difficult for stakeholders to prepare submissions.

### **Conclusion**

Professional teacher associations, like EBE NSW, are uniquely positioned to work with BOSTES to deliver on aspects of the above. Ongoing funding of these highly cost effective associations can only prove to be a worthwhile investment. We are committed to supporting teachers to provide high quality lessons in the classroom. EBE's greatest strength is its members – teachers in schools who are committed to their students and passionate about the curriculum. We welcome any further opportunities to provide feedback to the Review.

Joe Alvaro  
President – Economics and Business Educators NSW  
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