

# The importance of professional standards



To start this report I will explain the importance of professional standards. According to the LLUK (no date) the professional standards have a purpose. These standards are for all educators who work with in the lifelong learning sector which describe the skills, knowledge and attributes required for those who are in teaching and training roles.

### Professionalism in a teacher role

According to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (no date) teacher professionalism has relevant significance in education and that it affects the role of the teacher and his or her pedagogy, which in return affects the student's ability to learn effectively. Gipps et al (2005) stated that It can be defined as the ability to reach students in a meaningful way, developing innovative approaches to mandated content while motivating, engaging, and inspiring young adult minds to prepare for ever-advancing technology.

However, this definition does little to exemplify precisely how a professional teacher carries himself or herself. Teacher professionalism contains three essential characteristics, competence, performance, and conduct, which reflect the educator's goals, abilities, and standards, and directly impact the effectiveness of teaching through the development of these qualities.

According to teaching expertise (2006)The post-compulsory education and training (PCET) sector is broad and diverse. Teachers, trainers and tutors working in further education (FE) colleges, work-based learning (WBL) providers and organisations supporting community learning and development (CLD) come from a variety of backgrounds. Educators often enter teaching through their specialist subjects and often enough they are

recent graduates. Also, people have followed vocational pathways. A common circumstance is through their subjects, skills and knowledge.

Critically examines societies and your own, values in relation to education or training. (K1)

As an introduction to the values of professional practice Wallace (2009) commented...,

” Our values represent something internal to us – a part at our own moral and ethical guidance system.”

I believe that teaching and learning has a purpose to educate learners in the means to proceed and progress a learners future and career prospects. I believe that a value is a value created on someone’s own behalf. The purpose of education, I believe, is to educate and furthermore we need education in our daily lives to survive. The educator has a role which is to support and provide a service whilst at the same time motivating learners. Furthermore, It is key to stress that there should be a connection between the educator and learner and that there is a value towards a ‘ power relationship’, being a supportive educator who stimulates response through effective and clear communication. The value of a profession and professional for this matter is endless and could certainly raise questions on responsibility awareness and where responsibility begins and ends.

The comments above tie in closely with what makes a ‘ good teacher’. From personal reflections and thoughts, three distinct aspects came to my attention, which are:

1/ An effective listener towards the learners and staff

2/ Being respectful to colleagues and learners

3/ To be understanding towards learners and staff

Poor teaching or poor professionalism in teaching are as follows:

1/ Not letting students finish tasks – No reassurance of learning

2/ Impolite to staff and students

3/ Favouritism with students

In summary, the values which are distinct and should be considered as acceptable values for teaching professionals are being supportive, being a listener and also to respect all staff and students within the institution.

Professional practice can be determined with a set of values. These values are what educators should be following with on-going observation and reflective practice. According to LLUK (no date) there is a set of standards called the 'New overarching professional standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector'. Furthermore, the standards categorised into sub-sections which have specific professional objectives and act as guidelines. It is these objectives which educators must abide to throughout teacher practice. According to LLUK (no date) there is a set of 7 professional values.

An example would be,

AS 1 All learners, their progress and development, their learning goals and aspirations and the experience they bring to their learning

AS 2 Learning, its potential to benefit people emotionally, intellectually, socially and economically, and its contribution to community sustainability

As mentioned, each point has a value and purpose. From just observing the set of values, purposely constructed for educators within the LLUK sector, they are powerful and strong. I believe there is a problem with the values that educators may not be able to abide to all of these due to several reasons.

Firstly, funding, and that some institutes may suffer to deliver consistent values. Secondly, some of the values will have more demand than others. It can be argued that these values will vary according to the institute. It can be suggested that some institutions would decide to keep their dominant values.

Additionally, the values set by the LLUK are and should be approached with underpinning knowledge and understanding and a professional practice.

For example, referring to LLUK (No name),

The knowledge and understanding:

AK 1. 1 What motivates learners to learn and the importance of learners' experience and aspirations.

Professional practice:

AP 1. 1 Encourage the development and progression of all learners through recognising, valuing and responding to individual motivation, experience and aspirations

Darling-Hammond (1988) commented that the value of professionalism, in regards to educators, is fundamental and direction of excellence. The author states that educators need competence and that professionalism relates to three focuses which are preparation, knowledge of subject area, and defined pedagogy.

Firstly, preparation, prepares the professional for the classroom which examines the language and cultural barriers. All educators face deterrents in the classroom that must be broken down by individualised techniques.

Darling-Hammond (1988 pg. 59) related this to state...,

“ Decision making by well-trained professionals allows individual clients’ needs to be met more precisely and...promotes continual refinement and improvement in overall practice”

It is to suggest that values of professionalism are to be approached correctly.

This will encourage the educator to be prepared for the classroom.

Furthermore, the values of professionalism exist for a reason. They will benefit the professional teacher in terms of motivating and encourage student participation.

Alongside preparation, a professional educator with a strong knowledge of his/her subject area will create opportunities to be creative around the subject taught. As a result, Lesson planning and resource preparation time

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will be less because the educator will already understand the subject. This will reduce the time researching material.

It is worth commenting that it would be an advantage to know a subject inside out and would reflect and portray confidence in his/her teaching. In addition, the educator should have a wealth of experience which would benefit his/her practice and enhance their teaching.

According to Lunenburg and Ornstein (2000), developing such expertise and knowledge can take years to develop such knowledge.

As a result of this, I believe that constant reading and information seeking is important to teaching a specialist subject. It would be beneficial that an educator has worked and collaborated enough experience within the industry in order for them to teach or become specialists in their profession. I also believe that this would improve and develop opportunities when it comes to being creative.

It is helpful to outline the wider context within which FE practice and values of the professional educator.

Notwithstanding, the tutor groups in FE who were not previously included in the FE (e. g. colleges 14-19 diplomas), colleges have become 'livelier places'. Lecturers' activities have now geared more to ensuring that students remain on courses and that students pass qualifications' (Hyland and Merrill 2003 P. g. 86).

To summarise, I would like to comment that professional values assist the educator and that they should be utilised at all times during his or her

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practice. Guile and Lucas (1999 P. g. 204) suggested that clarification in terms of describing the FE educator is needed. It is worth suggesting that society decides and determines professionalism and the values of professionalism within reason to how the educator should be.

Demonstrate a critical awareness of the concept of professionalism as this relates to the current role of a teacher working in the PCET sector. (K1, K2)

With regard to the concept of professionalism, Humphreys and Hyland (2002 P. g. 06) argued that,

“...the concentration on performance in teaching and professional development is to be welcomed, provided that ‘ performance’ is not defined in purely technicist or instrumental terms...”

In other words, there is a purpose for performance in teaching which should not be confused or misinterpreted. The criteria, the role and responsibilities of a teacher have and are becoming more and more centralised. The questionable scenario/point to highlight here is that of the educator and how they are to overcome this challenge.

According to IFL, a Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status is recognition for newly qualified teachers within PCET. This highlights the identity of teachers in post-compulsory education and training. All new teachers need to achieve a Level 3 teaching qualification. Following this, new teachers have five years to achieve a Level 5 teaching qualification which leads to the QTLS status. The QTLS status is recognition of the teaching qualification in order to teach within the PCET sector. In working towards a



new profession, the IFL raises the importance for continuing professional development (CPD) which ensures that educators remain specialists in their chosen subject/s.

According to Millerson (1964), there is conflict and discussion to how the teacher should carry out their professional role. This relates to the nature of professionalism. Millerson (1964) mentioned that professionalism concerted most attention by sociologists in the 1950s. The main approach at the time focused on establishing the features that an occupation should have in order to be termed a profession.

Within context, this questioned how professions such as medicine and law should be perceived. In contrast, Hanlon (1998) highlighted that there is research on professionalism. The author stated that people see professionalism in a profession. The author has highlighted the point that teaching is a profession and that the role of the teacher is professional.

Critically evaluates a chosen aspect of quality assurance in PCET and relates this to the concept of professionalism. (K3)

To critique quality assurance within PCET it would be appropriate to define quality assurance.

To summarise, quality assurance is a system which prevents a lack of professionalism and through regular control standards and values can be maintained. This makes sure that the needs of the user/s is satisfied. The main purpose is to control assessment and also seeks to improve performance.

In addition, quality assurance controls and helps to benchmark against existing qualitative and quantitative results/feedback. Professionalism and quality assurance are two complex areas which overlap and must work together. The two areas concerned are of high importance to the teacher, the course team and the college/Institution.

The quality assurance process is closely linked with being a professional teacher and that the professional values should aim to assist and facilitate a direction. Being a professional teacher requires continuous professional development which is carried out by completing research within the specialist subject, faculty and institution.

According to the LLUK (no date), student feedback is valuable. There are two types of feedback, formal and informal approaches. It is vital that the PCET teacher considers regular peer observations which will help to improve teaching skills. Observations can help to critique teaching styles/approaches within teaching. Through regular peer assessment and observation, the PCET teacher/tutor must demonstrate effective and appropriate organisational skills which should be evidenced through lesson planning.

According to LLUK (No Date),

The department and staff should be measured using a variety of ways which should include and involve statistical data such as attendance records, grades, percentages, student profiles, student surveys and lesson observations and more. This data can interpret and help to benchmark against information. This should assist the control and assessment of quality assurance as mentioned above.

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The institution has a reputation to uphold and a quality status to achieve through goals and action plans. It is part of the PCET teacher to ensure that constant contributions and efforts are made which are then measured through internal audits, college records, league tables and every child matters policies.

Lastly, external bodies, as they help to mould the quality together. It could be stated that they are the ‘back bone’. External bodies such as, LLUK or Ofsted Inspectors, signify what must be done. It is an essential part for guidance and that these external bodies are to help and improve the PCET teacher, college/institution and department.

According to The University of Bath (2005) there would be a board and or a quality assurance committee who would be responsible for the staff teaching. Internal and external examiners are also utilised to produce reports which help to evaluate and review the teacher, department and institute.

All parts of the quality assurance system within PCET are vital to the mix of an overall quality performance. The chosen aspect for critical evaluation is observation.

Reasoning for my decision is that there is plenty of research and information about the topic.