

Why are professional standards important?



Introduction

To start this report I would like to 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 within 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, which in return affects the student's ability to learn effectively. This definition however does not describe how a professional should act within their job or workplace.

According to teaching expertise (2006) the post-compulsory education and training (PCET) sector is broad and diverse. Teachers, trainers and tutors who work within the FE sector have all had different experiences. Educators have often gained specialist knowledge within a particular industry e. g. hospitality and catering. An alternative route is through university and specialising this way.

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

Values of professional practice, according to Wallace (2009)....,

” 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 important to stress that there should be a connection between the educator and learner and that there is a positive relationship between them. It is important, as an educator, to communicate effectively. In addition, a profession and a professional work together in harmony. It should be made clear that a professional person needs values of professionalism. There may be some overlap in terms of how a professional should act or carry out a professional job.

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 is as follows:

- Not letting students finish tasks – No reassurance of learning
- Impolite to staff and students
- 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, it's 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 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.

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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 gained 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 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,

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“...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 concerned a lot of attention to 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 are 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.

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 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.

Observations assist educators and institutions in terms of learning and teaching. It should be made clear for what purpose the observation has and will this benefit the teacher or the institution or both.

Bains (2006) highlighted two main categories, formal and informal observations. These must be agreed upon before it takes place. Bains (2006) stated that Formal observations are those for Performance Management e. g. Ofsted. Informal observations are those used for professional development. These take part of internal monitoring systems. Peer observations, for example, for informal feedback.

The University of Sussex (no date) highlighted the importance of peer observation of teaching and that this enhances the status of teaching and learning and also strengthens quality assurance processes. The University of Exeter (2005) explained peer observations to be an assessment of teachers by teachers. Furthermore, pairings may be experienced by mentor/novice or experienced teacher. It could be argued that peer assessment can alternatively assess on various levels in terms of teaching experience.

It is also questionable whether the observation criterion assesses appropriately against the observed teacher. The peer observation should help the teacher to develop teaching skills by carrying out observations with colleagues. It should be highlighted that the main objective is to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on his or her teaching.

The QAA (2000) stated that peer observation provides educators with opportunities to learn from each other in a 'non-threatening environment'. This could suggest that teachers would share ideas constructively to his or her professional benefit and within relation to professional values.

In summary, it can be argued that peer assessment is for the educators benefit. It is debatable how institutions guarantee that students learn effectively and consistently at all times throughout their education. Peer observations are to improve teaching practice which can be seen as beneficial to newly qualified teachers. It can be commented that peer assessment assists less experienced teachers to improve their teaching skills.

Pagani (2002) commented that educators should have the freedom to choose peer assessor/observers. This approach could be argued as vague due to various reasoning behind fairness, equality and also being critical.

In agreement, Pagani (2002) stated that institutions should identify an area of focus for peer observation.

In summary, peer observations are useful and appropriate. There is some overlap and a lack of decisiveness to a concrete definition of observation. Furthermore, peer observations need to be carefully planned on the grounds of professionalism.

I believe that peer observation should not be considered as an informal practice. It would be fair to comment that it is a formal in-house procedure which adopts formal guidelines. In agreement, Partington and Brown (1997) identified that peer review is an essential process for reviewing ideas and identifies where mistakes could occur if action is not followed through carefully. It can be commented that this improves the quality of a product/service. The authors argued that it is an opportunity to criticise and that it is an aspect of building one's confidence and teaching.

Using relevant models of reflective practice to critically analyse learning on the Course

The course, for me, has been beneficial and an enjoyable experience. It is time to reflect on my teaching practice. There have been some difficult stages which I have highlighted and times where improvement and action have been considered. According to Brookfield (1988) critical thinking is a

process on recent experience with a past experience and should create an area or topic for discussion.

Brookfield (1988) mentioned that critical reflection should include differences and or any relationships which can be highlighted. The aim of critical reflection is to develop critical thinking skills which will determine specific and realistic outcomes.

On many occasions throughout the course I have reflected and it would be difficult to reflect on the whole course due to such varied topics and vast complexity of discussion.

Hatton and Smith (1995) designed a critical reflection model which identified a framework for writing and identifying different kinds of reflection. The model will be used to help assist with my critical reflective practice. The framework will also determine stages within my teaching practice where I believe it is worth discussing.

The first point of the model is descriptive and aims to create a starting point. To the attention of past reflections and practice it is a wise and an appropriate decision to reflect upon the micro-teach (pttls). The micro-teach was carried out within the early stages of my teaching practice. This was my starting point for teaching and reflecting.

The second point will highlight descriptive reflections which attempts to provide reasons based upon personal judgment. I realised that an active approach to my hospitality students was required and that the VAKs strategies improved my lesson planning and time management.

Gradually, as the course continued, lesson planning developed to become more structured and defined in terms of my aims and objectives.

Throughout my reflective practice, to my attention, a number of students did not respond to how my lessons were planned. Thinking about this, this was down to the level of functional skills applied to the level delivered.

To my attention, I needed to improve my skills on delivery. I needed to understand how I should apply them appropriately and effectively in lessons.

The fourth action point within the model must relate to a broader historical, social and/or political context and what better than my experience and knowledge gained throughout the independent study of the curriculum module. The study helped to generate some valuable points on social, political, economical and technological factors within context to my teaching practice.

Brookfield (2001) described critical reflection to be a systematic effort which identified and discovered material. Brookfield (2001) developed the four lenses model which helped to analyse and assist teaching practices.

The four lenses are our own experiences as learners, students, colleagues, and reading the professional literature. These help to reveal the assumptions behind those practices and call them into question. The model of reflection will help to analyse my teaching practice within the points identified above.

My micro-teach was an experience and made me feel nervous and apprehensive as I have never taught before in my life.

Due to my nerves, I wanted to make sure that I was delivering correct and appropriate information. I researched around my chosen topic which reassured my teaching delivery. I also found that this became useful when I was using the question and answer technique. I found that I was applying teaching techniques and strategies that I had learnt in the first few weeks of the course. Having applied these teaching strategies they helped boost my confidence.

The question and answer technique was adopted to assist my delivery. I believe that this engaged my learners. I applied the VAKs strategies to help all learners. The students engaged well to my micro-teach and I now believe that I need to consider an active learning approach as I teach hospitality students. I personally found that the micro-teach went smooth considering it was my first time. Having now reflected, I think that more literature could have been used to support other learners.

To summarise, the micro-teach was certainly 'a stepping stone' towards becoming a successful teacher within the PCET sector. I found this a leap forwards and was extremely beneficial before going to my placement.

After Christmas I personally felt under a lot of pressure as I was accumulating my teaching hours as well as working towards my assignments. Most of my lesson reflections identified that my teaching technique and style was too relaxed. Some of my students started to misbehave and use this to their advantage in class. I realised, after many lessons and observations that I needed to deliver my lessons with an active approach which would then control and manage my class.

As a teacher trainee, I found that I was spending a lot of time on my lesson plans. They were not seeking the best out of students. I revisited my approach and consulted my mentor who kindly assisted my lesson planning. I found that this helped tremendously in writing and structuring my lessons. I found myself researching around activities and being creative when it comes to teaching. I researched and functional skills which closely linked with my VAKs and as result, I eventually found that students were learning effectively through their preferred methods of learning and my classroom management skills improved.

About half way through the course there were several issues regarding my lesson planning. My mentor assisted me to improve my aims and objectives. I needed to make sure that my aims and objectives were measurable and considered direction towards my classroom approach and student benefit.

As a teacher trainee, I feel that lesson planning is something that can only come in time. In fact, I realised that I needed to make sure I can plan a lesson now to ensure that I can deliver a lesson. My mentor and other colleagues supported me by letting me look at their lesson plans. My mentor and I agreed that I would submit my lesson plans before delivery. This helped me to understand and or rethink my aims and objectives. My lessons improved by being realistic about the aims and objectives and, as a result, improved student learning and teaching skills.

The course has certainly been a learning curve. One of the most challenging reports was the curriculum assignment. I personally found that the report involved a lot of reading around political, economical, sociological and

technological topics. The curriculum models were difficult to understand so I tried to refer to them in a realistic context at my placement.

My mentor was supportive and guided me through some of the curriculum models. From past reflections, I think that curriculum models and understanding them are vital towards delivering specific courses such as the BTEC national diploma course. This is a course I was helping to deliver. This helped me to understand how I should approach my delivery.

Make a critical comment on the value of reflective practice in the development of professional teachers. (K4, A2, A3)

It would be appropriate to explain and define reflection before making assumptions and critical comments. Reflection is an everyday sense which assists and looks back on past experiences.

Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) stated that critical reflection is known as a vehicle. This is used by educators to evaluate and analyse experiences within a classroom environment. Brookfield (1995) mentioned that critical reflective practice is a process which is used to analyse experiences. For example, curriculum development or theories. It can be stated that reflection is a process which analyses a point or action.

In addition, critical analysis could be used to understand why a point or action is how it is. Within reason, critical reflection will be used. As a metaphor, the reflective practice could be the foundations of a house. The purpose of reflection is clear. Consequently, reflection does not indicate who, what, where, how and or why practitioners should carry out reflections and that it is left to the educator.

This leads on to the work of Brookfield (1995) and stated that critical reflection can be broken into a number of dimensions which address or at least suggest a route for reflecting.

1. Descriptive
2. Descriptive with some reflection
3. Dialogic reflection
4. Critical reflection

Reflective practice, according to Brookfield (1995), stated that practitioners can develop self-awareness if they evaluate their performance/s on an on-going basis. The author stated that teaching practice can be improved by focussing on the experiences and activities used.

Within agreement, reflective practice is meaningful and it improves skills and knowledge. It can be argued that time and patience is an issue and not to forget how experienced the practitioner/educator is. I mean that reflective practice could prove more meaningful for a trainee teacher than an experienced teacher of over 10-20 years.

There are many angles which could be argued and that reflective practice improves over time and not over night.

Hatton and Smith (1995) agreed that self-awareness is meaningful when we want to improve teaching practice. Various teaching methods and skills allow the professional to consider alternative avenues.

This would have a positive impact on their teaching by increasing their level of self-awareness. It can be argued that teaching practice and professionalism can only be developed in time.

In addition, personal experiences and the experiences of colleagues should create an environment that enhances student learning. This suggests that the experienced practitioner is valuable and they should help trainee teachers to improve their teaching. As a result, the student, department and institution will benefit.

Bruner (1990) highlighted that critical reflective practice is an ongoing process which enriches curriculum. I would agree that educators strive to be effective and students want to be creative. This suggests that curriculum should reflect both parties concerned. There seems to be contrast and overlap to authors' opinions on reflection and being critical.

It is to suggest that all practitioners have aims and objectives which determine enhance teaching practices and students performances. Curriculum awareness is highlighted and reflective practice should aim to achieve and improve the educator in terms of the teaching practice, student's grades, the college league boards and attendance and reputation.

Bruner (1990) would recommend that teachers engage in critical conversations with colleagues which would enhance and determine educational philosophies, instructions, and responsibilities to students' growth. To summarise, it can be commented that a practitioner should reflect on their experiences. Reflective practice would eventually re-shape his or her teaching practice. It should be expressed that reflection is wise

and is compulsory towards becoming and or achieving higher standards of teaching practice for the practitioner, the students and the institute.

In addition, I believe that the professional teacher/educator should consider and value students' comments. This would engage the students more and would assist the practitioner to understand the students better.

Reflective practice develops professionals and enables us to learn from our own experiences. Although, I would argue that more experience does not guarantee improved learning. In addition, I don't believe that twenty years of teaching is twenty years of learning about teaching. It may also be the case that one year repeats over twenty times with no reflections made. I would consider this as poor teaching. It is worth commenting that reflections are honest and effective which should, in time, improve teaching skills. From reading, it has drawn to my attention that additional research is required around critical reflective practice.

A review for appropriate opportunities within my personal professional development and to discuss my acquisition of skills in relation to professional development. (A1, A3)

ATL (Association of Teachers and Lecturers) (2009) mentioned that since September 2007, all educators within the further education and skills sector in England came under new regulations which revised teaching qualifications. Continuous professional development (CPD) for all teachers are now required and is requested by the Institute for Learning (IfL).

To gain and create opportunities within PPD and CPD action will be considered. First of all, up to this date, a review of my skills will be summarised which will help and assist the development opportunities.

As part of the PPD and CPD, IFL membership is required in order to complete the CPD. Depending on a job after the course, full-time teachers should undertake at least 30 hours of CPD per year for professional development. CPD is a condition of retaining the IFL membership and aims to improve teaching skills. IFL made CPD compulsory for newly qualified teachers and permits them to teach within FE colleges.

Examples of informal CPD might be to work shadowing, peer observation, attendance at subject-specific conferences, reading journal articles, or gathering up-to-date information on new curricula and or helping on qualifications such as 14-19 diplomas.

A skills audit was completed for WBE 1 file which identified various weaknesses which could potentially be made into positive outcomes. In addition, WBE 1 and WBE 2 files were compared using the reflective practice gained throughout the course. The skills audit identified some weaknesses and also strengths. One of the main highlighted weaknesses was maths/numeric skills and that consideration would be focussed to embed these into lessons. This was a smart target objective to accomplish before finishing the course. Secondly, writing and literacy skills and was more closely related to proof reading documents before submission. On the other hand, the audit highlighted that IT and communication skills were high and that confidence developed.

Action was considered using smart objectives which were defined to achieve in a step by step process however I still feel discomfort w