

Introduction

The Community Learning and Development Standards Council Scotland (CLDSC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the GTCS's draft Professional Standards and Code. The CLDSC has a particular interest in teachers having a clear understanding of how their own role relates to the that of other educators, including CLD practitioners in particular, and a broader interest in how the Professional Standards and Code contribute to the development of education and lifelong learning in Scotland.

Comments on the Professional Standards and Code as a whole

The refreshed Professional Standards and Professional Code make a strong statement of commitment to upholding values and standards of practice, and to being accountable for these to learners and the wider public. The commitments to social justice and learning for sustainability are particularly welcome.

We suggest that it is essential that the practice of teachers in all settings is informed by understanding of how their work relates to lifelong learning and the role of other educators within that, and that the Professional Standards and Professional Code need much stronger references to this.

To underpin both this understanding, and the commitment to social justice and learning for sustainability, it would be very helpful to include and highlight definitions of “education” and “learning community” that make clear that these terms do not refer only to schools and are not used only in a “school-centric” way. It is helpful to think of the school and those with an immediate interest in it as a learning community but equally important that teachers understand the school they work in as part of a wider learning community, or network of learning communities, where learning happens in a variety of settings including families, geographic and interest-based communities, workplaces, colleges and universities. An awareness, for example, that geographic communities often do not coincide neatly with school catchment areas, and of the implications of this, is important in working with children and young people, families and community groups.

None of this is to suggest that teachers' primary focus should not be on their specific role centred on learning and teaching, or that they should take on responsibility for everything that impacts on their school or learning centre. Rather it is about the importance of supporting teachers to practise in a way that reflects an understanding of education as a multi-faceted set of activities and that links as effectively as possible with other aspects of this.

Professional Code

We welcome the introduction of a positively-framed, values-based code. We suggest that the presentation could be simplified and clarified by linking the commitments in

the 4 bullet points at the start of section 4 to the values statements in 3 (or an amended version of these incorporating material from the table in section 4) rather than having the separate tables in 3 & 4.

Standards for full registration

We welcome the emphasis in 3.1.5 of the Standards for Registration on teachers creating and sustaining “effective working relationships with colleagues, parents/carers, wider school community and partner agencies, to support learning and well-being”. However we suggest that this needs to be much more strongly supported by emphasis on the need for understanding of the wider context in which individual schools, and the school system in Scotland as a whole, seek to educate their pupils. For instance, in section 2.2.1 of the Standards for Registration (“Education Systems”) there is reference to “the principal influences on Scottish education” with the context indicating that “Scottish education” consists entirely of schools and so communicating that it can be considered as such; while in section 2.2.2, “Learning Communities”, references are entirely to schools, education authorities etc; there is no mention of local communities, other public services, employers or other educators. We suggest that a specific reference to collaborative work with CLD practitioners in local authority and 3rd sectors would be appropriate here.

We also suggest that in seeking to set rigorous standards for teachers to achieve full registration at the end of their probationary period, the Standards for Registration are on the one hand not wholly realistic, and on the other, make it difficult to articulate how teachers are expected to develop. The lengthy list of requirements appears to us to be less than helpful in identifying the essential and attainable competences for an effective early-career educator in the school context.

Standards for Leadership and Management

We welcome the wide view of leadership presented in these Standards, including in particular the opening statement in 1.1 “All leaders have a responsibility to actively engage in multi and inter-agency working across their learning community and beyond...in order to achieve positive outcomes for all learners and support improvement.” Similarly we welcome the emphasis in 3.4, Relationships and Partnership, on collaboration to support participation by children and young people, families and others, building relationships to foster the home learning environment and multi-agency working.

We suggest that these aspects of the Standards could be further strengthened through reference to our earlier comments in relation to “learning communities” and awareness of the wider context of education and lifelong learning.

We see section 2, Strategic Vision, Professional Knowledge and Understanding and Interpersonal Skills and Abilities, as being particularly helpful. A question arises for us from the location of all of this material within the Standards for Leadership and Management. Would a focus on underpinning elements of practice, such as interpersonal skills, be useful in the Standards for Registration, including for newly-qualified teachers and probationers? We suggest it would. It also appears to us that

there is a potential risk that teachers who do not regard themselves as “leaders” do not make use of material within the Standards for Leadership and Management that could be positive and important for their development.

Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning

While the Introduction to the Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning states that “The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning has not been designed as a benchmark of teacher competence and therefore should not be used in that way”, much of the subsequent content reads as providing benchmarks for competence, rather than a framework for a continuing process of professional development. We suggest that it would be much preferable for the content of the Standard to follow the direction indicated by the Introduction.

Section 3.4 of the Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning, (Educational contexts and current debates in policy, education and practice) points towards a much more critical, outward and forward-looking role for teachers through working, for example, “collaboratively across disciplines, professions and communities, locally and globally” in order to “facilitate system improvement”. This appears to us to identify key actions required for positive change. We believe that if the Standards and Professional Code as a whole could be reframed to more strongly support “challenge” and “professional courage” (as highlighted in 3.4) within day-to-day practice they would be greatly enhanced.