



Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards

Jointly developed by
Education International and UNESCO



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

*“Teacher professionalism
is not negotiable.
Just as we would never
want unqualified surgeons
operating on our children,
we do not want our young
people to be taught by
unqualified teachers.”*

2019

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Foreword

The *ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers* (1966) and the *UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel* (1997) set out principles concerning the rights and responsibilities of educators. The Education 2030 Framework for Action (2015) recognises the central role of teachers and the importance of strengthening teaching for inclusive and equitable quality learning. The joint *Education International/ UNESCO framework on the development of professional teaching standards* aims to improve teacher quality, teaching and learning, as well as support the implementation and monitoring of the teacher target in the Education 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and specifically Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4).

The 8th World Congress of Education International (EI) held in Bangkok in July 2019 passed a resolution supporting the implementation of this joint *EI/UNESCO framework on the development of professional teaching standards* where it was made crystal clear that teachers and their unions must be at the centre of the process, working with governments and other education stakeholders. This is in line with the spirit of the *Education 2030 Framework for Action* which calls for the full participation of teachers and their representative organisations in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education policy. This is not just important for educators, it is essential for students and their learning.

Teachers are the professional leaders of learning in their classrooms and in their schools and teachers' unions are the representative bodies that should guide the professional framework for teachers in all settings. Teaching practice must be evidence based and student focussed. Teachers must have access to continuous professional learning and development throughout their careers and must be involved in developing teacher as well as education policy more broadly. All highly successful educational systems rely on the experience and expertise of teachers to shape teacher and education policies.

Improving teacher salaries and working conditions is absolutely essential, but the status of teachers is not just about pay and conditions. It is also about empowering and supporting teachers to stand at the centre of what they do – the teaching and learning process. The teaching profession must play a leading role in the design and implementation of the policies and practices necessary to create classrooms that are conducive to quality teaching and learning. Defining what constitutes effective, ethical practice is a core responsibility of the profession.

Several EI members in Africa, Asia Pacific and elsewhere warned about the pressing need to fight de-professionalisation and to put an end to the precarious status of teachers. Quality education depends on quality teachers with high qualifications and expertise, not some quick-fix, fast-track system designed to get teachers in and out of the classroom in short bursts, creating system churn and failing to provide clear career pathways that lead to a fulfilling lifetime in teaching.

Teacher professionalism is not negotiable. Just as we would never want unqualified surgeons operating on our children, we do not want our young people to be taught by unqualified teachers.

This *EI/UNESCO global framework of professional teaching standards* means that teachers and their unions stand over their profession as guardians of ethics and the defenders of standards that work for teachers and their students. It is an important step in transnational co-operation to ensure that the best education is available for all students.

We encourage teacher unions and governments to use this framework to strengthen their national teaching standards and teaching and learning practices in order to ensure equitable, inclusive, free, quality education for all.

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1. Introduction

This document outlines a Professional Teaching Standards¹ Framework for teachers. The framework focuses on clarifying and specifying teaching standards aimed at enhancing equitable and quality education for all. This paper will help to increase understanding and cohesiveness around the teaching profession internationally. Specifically, it sets out key elements of a Framework of Professional Teaching Standards that could be adopted as a common international approach and used by teachers' professional associations, education unions, and teachers themselves to enhance their professional work. As such, the intended audience of the paper includes teachers, in particular, and their union representatives, as well as education policy makers considering ways of supporting and developing the teaching profession to enhance quality education. Such support can also assist towards the realisation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education. It is hoped that the document will stimulate discussion and understanding of the work of teachers and education quality. Any framework such as this is intended to inform and guide the development or review of national teaching standards.

2. Situating Professional Teaching Standards for Teachers

This document maps out key elements of professional teaching standards that can cohere as a common framework internationally and be adapted nationally to suit diverse contexts, promoting government and teacher ownership². Key to the development of professional standards is the idea of a teaching profession defined by its shared knowledge and expertise, and its shared commitment to defending its standards of practice. A profession's ethical commitment to protecting its standards is exercised in the interests of its members, and in the interests of learners, each community, and society generally.

The idea of teaching as a profession is manifest in a set of teaching standards, which capture and present statements of practice that reflect teachers' professional commitment and work, and which are recognised as credible by the profession, and generally understood as an ethical stance in the interests of the community.

At a technical or definitional level, research has identified different types of teaching standards. One taxonomy identifies three major categories of standards:

- Ethical Standards, constituted generally in relatively broad statements of expectations of the profession's nature, ambitions, and dispositions
- Content Standards, describing the scope and specific nature of teachers' work
- Measurement Standards, which set the level or 'quality' of teachers' expertise

This paper draws on this broad taxonomy in a very general way to present and discuss the framework.

A framework of professional teaching standards is built on a shared statement of principles that express the core ideals that underpin the teaching profession and which all teachers share and work towards.

The principles that underpin a teaching standards framework are expressed as domains, or categories, within which teachers' work can be most usefully described. Three categories or domains are noted:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Practice (pedagogy)
- Teaching relations (professional relationships)

These are informed by taxonomies present in existing frameworks.

When considering the potential application and usefulness of a professional teaching standards framework, the profession may want to recognise that standards can be described at different levels of teacher experience and expertise.

This Professional Teaching Standards Framework describes 10 Standards across the three domains. By necessity, these are general statements which broadly demarcate teachers' work and practices³. In this framework, each Standard statement reflects what the desirable level of practice is and what the associated competency is.

3. Delimiting the Framework

It is important to recognise several limitations of this Teaching Standards Framework:

- This Framework does not cover all aspects that relate to processes for developing teaching standards, or their potential applications and effects. Nor is it a Teacher Standards Framework. Rather, it is focused on professional practice and as such on teaching.
- Governance arrangements, either for developing or applying Standards, are not addressed. While underlining the critical importance of coherence and teacher participation in the development of professional teaching standards, processes for developing the framework for local application, and for interpreting and assessing possible applications and effects are not addressed. Similarly, issues of community participation in teachers' work are not addressed.
- The Framework is limited to setting possible common and agreed reference points for describing, and therefore promoting and defending, the core work of teachers, in the interests of both teachers and the community.
- Any teaching standards framework carries within it a strong ethical dimension which is implied in the aspirations represented in the standard statements themselves. It is appropriate that this Framework might be augmented with

statements of ethics or in-principle intents, which resonate most effectively within diverse contexts and can be tailored accordingly at the national level.

- It is understood that the term ‘standards’, with regard to teachers’ professional practice, can signify different things in different contexts. There are technical or definitional issues, as well as political effects to consider. In many cases, these are simple matters of translation or cultural resonances. In others, there are concerns based on local and sometimes bitter experiences of using professional discussions of standards to impose specific employment practices.
- This Professional Teaching Standards Framework is not intended to undermine the standing of teachers and their working arrangements. In that regard, the Teaching Standards Framework should not be taken in part and instrumentalised to control or limit teachers’ professional autonomy or academic freedom.
- Credible, well-considered standards are intended to protect teachers from bureaucratic managerialism and regulation and not designed to be anti-teacher. This Framework is not designed to facilitate supervisory processes of measurement or monitoring that are against the interests of professionalism and therefore against the interests of teachers. If the Standards are to be used to evaluate the quality of teaching, this must be set within a context of development-focused, supportive, and equitable arrangements for teacher leadership and management. This approach is cognisant of protecting the professionalism inherent in the complex work of teachers.
- A teaching standards framework should promote and enhance what teaching is. It should support teachers’ professional judgment and discretion, and enhance professional standing. As such, this Framework is an important tool for protecting and building the reputation of the teaching profession.

In light of the above, additional work that grounds the development and implementation of professional teaching standards in a robust theoretical framework and a broader setting with other major education stakeholders is required as a complementary contribution to the Framework.

4. Principles Underpinning the Professional Teaching Standards

A set of professional principles should commit the profession to a broad purpose and set the expectations that the profession holds of itself against this purpose.

Thus, these Standards are underpinned by a set of underlying principles that informed their purpose and helped to shape their nature and potential application.

The general principles described below seek to apply to the context within which teacher professionalism might be addressed through this Professional Teaching Standards Framework. They seek to highlight the interrelationship between the ethical mission of teaching and the essential nature of the work in practice.

These principles should be viewed as reference points for determining the validity of the elaboration of the Standards and the processes for applying them. It is on this basis that the principles themselves constitute the primary professional standard for teaching.

The 12 principles that underpin the Professional Teaching Standards Framework are:

- i.** Quality education is a universal right of all children, young people, and adults, in the interests of individuals, communities and societies.
- ii.** Quality education is predicated on high-quality teaching, for all students, in all circumstances.
- iii.** Teachers' work is organised around maximising student learning, future life chances and wellbeing, in close collaboration with education support personnel and other professionals.
- iv.** Teachers are defined as individuals holding formally recognised teaching qualifications and who meet standards of practice that are defined, judged, and recognised through the teaching profession.
- v.** All teachers should be trained at university or equivalent institutions and have the requisite knowledge, skills, and competences to meet the diverse needs of students.
- vi.** The teaching profession is constituted by teachers so defined, and in alignment with teacher representative organisations.
- vii.** It is in the interests of the community generally, and children particularly, that only trained and qualified members of the teaching profession be engaged to undertake teachers' work.
- viii.** Effective and ethical school organisational practice is built on teachers' professional judgment and standards of practice defined by the teaching profession.
- ix.** Members of the teaching profession with leadership and administrative responsibilities in schools and other education institutions support teachers at all levels to achieve, maintain, and defend professional standards.
- x.** Professional teaching standards address and actively support universal access to and opportunities for quality education for all.
- xi.** The teaching profession as a whole, and its individual members, are ethically and actively committed to supporting the principles, precepts, and standards of teachers' professional practice and to promoting equitable inclusive quality education for all in the interests of all students, teachers, and the community.
- xii.** Governments and education authorities have an obligation to ensure that teachers receive the necessary support, training, professional development, opportunity to engage in and access research, including action research in order to enable all students to develop to their full potential.

5. Domains and Standards

At the centre of this Framework of Professional Teaching Standards are three domains and 10 Standards, or Standard statements.^{4,5}

The three domains are:^{6,7}

I. Teaching Knowledge and Understanding

It can be taken as given that effective teaching relies on teachers being expert enough at the knowledge, skills, and understandings of particular subjects or learning areas to be able to teach them. Good teachers know and understand their subjects, teaching methodologies, and students. Teachers also understand the social, cultural, and developmental issues that might relate to their students and their learning processes. Specific learning content will vary substantially across countries, but teaching will always require enough depth of knowledge, skills, and understanding of content, the students in the class, and contextual issues, to be able to bring the students to their own appropriate levels of understanding.

This should not imply that teaching is a simple process of transmitting knowledge from a teacher to a student. Meaning and understanding is developed in processes and relationships shaped by the complex and varied contexts within which students learn. There is therefore a substantial overlap in real terms with the other essential domains of this Framework.

II. Teaching Practice

The Standards in this domain describe the key dimensions of the direct engagement of teachers with their students.

Effective teaching is crucially determined in this domain, where the practices that most distinctly constitute teaching can be elaborated. Teaching activities manifest in innumerable ways and always reflect a teacher's ambition for, and understanding of, student learning, welfare and development. Effective teaching methodologies and practices within this domain rely on the Knowledge and Understanding Domain as well as on various Teaching Relations.

III. Teaching Relations

Teaching is inherently constituted in relationships. As well as engaging with students, professional relationships with colleagues, parents, caregivers, and education authorities are crucial to effective teaching. Relations with the general community are also crucial to a teacher's work and to the profession as a whole.

| Three Domains | Ten Standards | |
|--|---------------|---|
| <p><u>I. Teaching Knowledge and Understanding</u></p> <p>Practising teachers know and understand:</p> | 1 | How students learn, and the particular learning, social, and development needs of their students |
| | 2 | The content and related methodologies of the subject matter or content being taught |
| | 3 | Core research and analytical methods that apply in teaching, including with regard to student assessment |
| <p><u>II. Teaching Practice</u></p> <p>Teachers' practice consistently demonstrates:</p> | 4 | Planning and preparation to meet the learning objectives held for students |
| | 5 | An appropriate range of teaching activities that reflect and align with both the nature of the subject content being taught, and the learning, support, and development needs of the students |
| | 6 | Organisation and facilitation of students' activities so that students are able to participate constructively, in a safe and cooperative manner |
| | 7 | Assessment and analysis of student learning that informs the further preparation for, and implementation of required teaching and learning activity |
| <p><u>III. Teaching Relations</u></p> <p>Teachers' professional relations include active participation in:</p> | 8 | Cooperative and collaborative professional processes that contribute to collegial development, and support student learning and development |
| | 9 | Communications with parents, caregivers, and members of the community, as appropriate, to support the learning objectives of students, including formal and informal reporting |
| | 10 | Continuous professional development to maintain currency of their professional knowledge and practice |

| | |
|------|--|
| 1 » | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications of students' physical, social, and intellectual development • Implications of social, cultural and economic diversity, and the related circumstances of students and their learning environments • Implications of digital technologies on students' learning |
| 2 » | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core content knowledge and skills • Implications of the content knowledge for teaching methodologies |
| 3 » | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research methodologies and related analytical skills that can be applied to new learning • Principles and practices of effective student assessment |
| 4 » | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying specific learning objectives for students • Researching, organising, and scheduling lessons to meet those objectives |
| 5 » | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice of teaching processes and structuring of learning activities that align with the requirements of the subject content • Variations in teaching and learning that facilitate engagement of students |
| 6 » | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A safe and secure environment • Effective classroom management having regard to the needs of all individuals and the class as a whole |
| 7 » | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent, fair, valid, and reliable assessment of student work using an appropriate range of methods • Analysis of information to adjust planning and practice of lessons toward achieving learning objectives |
| 8 » | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative processes with regard to lesson planning, teaching activity, and student welfare, that support students • Cooperative processes that support teachers' professional learning, development, and welfare |
| 9 » | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal and informal reporting to parents, caregivers, and the community on student learning and welfare • Presentation of a range of professional issues, including with regard to the expertise and status of the profession |
| 10 » | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in formal professional learning and development • Ongoing analysis and reflection on practice to develop professional practice |

6. Possible Further Elaboration of a Professional Teaching Standards Framework

The Professional Teaching Standards above have broadly articulated key domains and standard statements that constitute the work of teachers and their expertise as members of a profession.

There are several ways to further develop and elaborate the Framework subject to consultation and discussion. These include:⁸

- Applying professional teaching standards to determine a minimum level of professional attainment: This is commonly referred to as Teacher Registration. In this Framework, two levels of mandatory attainment are identified: Graduate Teacher⁹ and Practicing Teacher¹⁰. They can be applied as one level or as distinct levels. The point at which one is considered a teacher, a member of the profession, and registered as such, will need to be determined.
- Celebrating outstanding practitioners. Participatory consultations are necessary to consider whether this Standards Framework should be used to recognise outstanding teachers as part of a full, career-spanning, professional framework. Any consideration of the recognition of outstanding teachers must be premised on the idea that outstanding practice is not isolated, but evolves from, the Standards for Practicing Teachers as articulated in the national framework¹¹. This is an optional addition and its development will depend on the culture of individual national education systems.
- Standards for professional leaders. This level of teaching identifies and recognises the specific practices, based on high levels of expertise in each domain, that support colleagues and lead to the further development of the profession. They are not therefore a simple step up from Highly Accomplished Teacher Levels. The elaborations of the Standards for this level represent the specific activities which model for, or lead, other teachers and assist in their professional development. The activity relies on outstanding professional capacity but describes the additional steps of active professional leadership¹².
- Elaborations in subject areas. In some contexts, it might be important to elaborate the Professional Teaching Standards Framework for different subjects or learning areas.
- Additional elaboration: The elaborations of the Standards Framework presented are not regarded as comprehensive. There may be specific purposes to which Standards are applied that require additional elaborations. For example, they may be used to develop continuing professional development courses, professional mentoring, or any other professionally related activity that benefits from a more explicit expression of expectations than this Framework of Professional Teaching Standards.

7. Implementing a Professional Teaching Standards Framework

The 12 Principles of professional teaching practice set out in the Framework are a common and agreed foundation for interpreting and applying all aspects of the Standards Framework. The effect of this is to ensure that the Standards can only be legitimately applied to support the integrity of the teaching profession.

In any discussion of potential processes or mechanisms for applying professional teaching standards, the role of professional judgment must be recognised as key to the integrity of that application. In this framework, this is recognised in the Principles of Professional Teaching Practice, the holistic wording of the Standards, and the elaborations and implementation issues addressed.

1. Standards as Reference for Further Development

This Framework suggests that governments and teacher associations and unions may choose to develop additional domains to augment the Framework of Professional Teaching Standards where specific issues are prioritised. These might include, for example, a domain related to ethics, which are not specifically addressed in this Framework except in broad terms. It is also not inconsistent that the application of this framework might be accompanied by a more detailed set of Standards for Continuous Professional Learning and Development (CPLD), for example, that could present as an additional domain. Many governments that implement a standards framework include Standards for CPLD programmes within their broader framework. In this Framework, which is intended to help establish commonality across the profession, the elaboration of specific standards for CPLD is an option left to governments and teachers and their representative organisations. Standards for CPLD generally describe the expectations of courses or processes, rather than the specific and more common classroom practice of teaching. The considerations for developing such CPLD standards raise a range of issues that are not addressed in this paper. These include questions of the relationship between CPLD and student learning, the site and nature of CPLD (for example, in class, off-site, expert input etc).

2. Developing the Measures for the Attainment of Standards

The potential to judge attainment or achievement of Standards is related to both the wording of the Standards and the application of the Standards. The Standards as organised and worded in this Framework might require specific measurement. In developing measures, it is important that each Standard is understood holistically. In any process of judgment or assessment against the Standard, a holistic or integrated judgment needs to be made, as it is the holistic Standard that is being judged rather than any particular action or activity. As such, they need to be used cautiously in developing assessment measures.

Key to developing measures based on the Standards is the need to ensure validity and reliability. In this respect, valid indicators of effective teaching or of achievement of the Standards need to be developed whilst preserving the holistic approach of the Framework. A consultative and participatory approach involving teachers and their representatives is needed to identify accurate and meaningful sources of evidence and indicators of achievement of the Standard statements.

8. Conclusion

The implementation of this Professional Teaching Standards Framework with integrity and fidelity relies on teachers' professional judgment, the fundamental expectation of which is stated in the Principles of Professional Teaching Practice. It is designed to support teachers in their work and practice to ensure equitable and quality education for all, as articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Core References

This framework draws on an enormous range of inputs and references, including global and regional consultations. Each of the items listed below, including, in particular, established standards frameworks have themselves drawn on extensive research and mapping of practice around the world.

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Endnotes

- 1** The paper identifies common and essential principles for a professional model but does not claim that the uses of terminology and the taxonomies employed are the only valid or useful ones. A variety of taxonomies and organisational frames are valid, but in the end, judgments will need to be made that allow for coherence to be built internationally, over time. This may include mapping of existing frameworks, or of frameworks that are currently being developed, to common elements. The paper is written to allow for such an evolutionary approach.
- 2** The approach is informed by a study of teaching Standards around the world, and is particularly informed by successful implementation in Australia, Canada and Scotland. Of course, these are not the only successful approaches. Perceptions are subjective, but work undertaken in other countries have made substantial and positive contributions to the status of the profession in those countries, and substantially inform this paper and the framework.
- 3** Application of these Standards in any context would require that governments recognise the Standards as valid general descriptors of teaching, and that they are able to map their own approaches to them, forming an agreed international core of teaching Standards.
- 4** Two of the Standards Domains in this framework —Knowledge and Understanding and Teaching Practice— are common inclusions across existing Standards frameworks, even if by slightly different wording. These are more easily directly mapped to existing approaches or applied at face meaning. The Domain of Teaching Relations is expressed in different ways in different contexts, explicitly or by implication. Often these expressions overlap with activity that apply Standards but might not be understood in all circumstances as the core activity of teaching as such.
- 5** It is important to note that the three domains overlap significantly and can only constitute effective practice when applied together, in varied forms and combinations; achieving professional status against Standards would require recognition across all three of the Domains in some way.
- 6** These Domains are not Standards in themselves, they are categories that teachers understand and under which more specific descriptors of teaching - Standards - can be developed and then applied for various purposes. They are appropriate to this purpose because they are recognisable by teachers globally as genuine, though not immutable, areas within which teaching can be described. It is important to note that the three Domains overlap significantly and can only constitute effective practice when applied together, in varied forms and combinations; achieving professional status against Standards would require recognition across all three of the Domains in some way.
- 7** Issues within this Domain of professional activity are often contested in political and industrial contexts. Expectations of formal line-management reporting requirements for example, might be presented as professional responsibilities. Similarly, accessibility to parents might have industrially based time implications for teachers. The validity of inclusions in this domain of Standards should be tested against the words and intent of the Principles of Professional Teaching Practice. The development of Standards within this Domain is necessary for the profession to assert an ethical and sustainable approach to these issues when they are contested.
- 8** The Elaborations presented attempt to identify the core issues that can be agreed to exist within each Standard. The Elaborations are worded as topics rather than descriptions of practice. The specific wording of Elaborations as descriptions of practice will be developed by governments in consultation with teachers and their representatives as the basis for effective application of the Standard, to the extent that is considered appropriate. It is therefore much more likely that there will be substantial variation across the profession in the wording that might be utilised. It is possible to word the Elaborations of the Standards so that they themselves constitute a Standard, and such wording will depend on the nature of any application within specific contexts. None of the Elaborations are presented or should be regarded as independent in practice from each other, across any of the Standards.
- 9** Graduate teacher Standards emphasise knowledge and understanding, as well as capacity, rather than consistent and sustained practice. Building initial high levels of knowledge and understanding, as well as demonstrating an initial capacity to undertake teaching tasks, are necessary dimensions of the Graduate stage of professional development. Subject content knowledge is an area in which a level of depth is required before practice, and is generally attained through study, even as it necessarily continues to be developed while in teaching practice. Another example is a teacher's research and analytical skills which are introduced as part of theoretical preparation. Such skills might be applied to research new subject content or pedagogical developments, for example. But in any case, the capacity to understand and derive meaning from research and analysis that can then be applied to practice is an essential underpinning of professional practice.
- 10** The Practising Teacher Level of Standards is where the Domains of: Knowledge and Understanding, Teaching Practice, and Teaching Relations apply most completely for all teachers. The Standards, as described at this Level, constitute the professional practice of teaching as required to meet expectations held of the profession by itself and by the community. The Level of Practising Teacher is best understood as incorporating within it the essential requirements of the Graduate Level. It is only possible to operate effectively at the Practising Teacher Level as described in the Standards for that Level, if the capacities described in the Standards for Graduates are considered inherent.
- 11** A possible approach in this respect is to recognise Outstanding Teaching such as the category of - Highly Accomplished Teacher. Highly Accomplished teaching represents practice across the three Domains that mirrors the descriptors of teaching at the Practising level but recognises the performance or execution of that practice as being both uncommon and highly regarded by colleagues.
- 12** More fine-grained distinctions to establish a hierarchy of teaching practice is not supported by research or by the evidence of teacher feedback. That is, teachers don't in normal professional interaction recognise a multi-step hierarchy of effective practice in a way that is shared and agreed.

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