



The Development of the Professional Values and Practice Standard in a Secondary Graduate Initial Teacher Training Route in England

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Abstract

The paper reports on a pilot research project to investigate how trainee teachers develop an understanding of the competences that must be reached in the area of professional practice and values , which is one of the standards that needs to be met before the award of Qualified Teacher Status in England. Data were collected from secondary trainee teachers, their placement mentors in schools and university tutors. Data have been interpreted in the context of potential threats to the professionalism of teachers, through the introduction of managerialist influences in public funded education. The main findings are: that trainees think that the most dominant influence on developing understanding of professional values are their school placements ; there were little differences in the responses from four subject areas studied ; mentors and other lead teachers play an important role in the development of understanding of professional values; the grades awarded by mentors when assessing professional practice and values varies between the four subjects studied. The explanation for these findings is complex and is related to the understanding and interpretation of the standard by both mentors and trainee teachers. The findings highlight some of the difficulties in attempting to assess competency standards in an area that is underpinned by values and suggest that initial teacher training can best assist the development of the standard when it is approached in a critical way by all parties.

Background

To qualify as a teacher in England it is necessary to demonstrate that a trainee has met the "standards". The first of these is concerned with professional values and practice.

Those awarded Qualified Teacher Status must understand and uphold the professional code of practice of the General Teaching Council for England by demonstrating all of the following:

1.1 They have high expectations of all pupils; respect their social, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds and are committed to raising their educational achievement.

1.2 They treat pupils consistently, with respect and consideration, and are concerned for their professional development.

1.3 They demonstrate and promote the positive values, attitudes and behaviour that they expect from their pupils.

1.4 They can communicate sensitively and effectively with parents and carers, recognising their roles in pupil's learning and their rights, responsibilities and interests in this

1.5 They can contribute to, and share responsibility in, the corporate life of schools.

1.6 They understand the contribution that support staff and other professionals make to teaching and learning.

1.7 They are able to improve their own teaching, by evaluating it, learning from effective practice of others and from evidence .They are motivated and able to take increasing responsibility for their own professional development.

1.8 They are aware of, and work within, the statutory frameworks relating to teachers' responsibilities.

The paper explores how university education tutors, trainees and their mentors in placement schools contribute to the development and assessment of this standard and their views on teachers as professionals.

Trainees in this study were following a variety of secondary teacher training courses in religious education (RE), English, mathematics, and science education. Those taking the RE and English courses were both following 1- year post graduate course. These students all had a degree directly relevant to their subject. Those taking mathematics and science courses were following a mixture of 1 year standard or 2 year conversion postgraduate courses and 3- year undergraduate courses. Consequently the size of cohorts varies considerably, for example in 2004/05 (for which analysis of grade data is included) English n=26, mathematics n=45, science n= 59, RE n=12. In the UK currently there is generally a shortage of applicants for teacher training courses, however at Sheffield Hallam University the English course is heavily oversubscribed unlike the other courses. Higher selection criteria may have a bearing on students' eventual grading on professional standards. The intake to all courses is very diverse with a significant number of students from backgrounds who have not traditionally participated in higher education or training for 'professions'. All trainees have a common "professional year", which includes subject - based modules, a general professional studies course and school - based training.

In many countries, the induction of teachers into the profession is seen as *education* and universities have a leading role. In England there is more of an emphasis on accredited *training* which can be supervised by universities, groups of schools, or private education companies. All of these work in partnership with schools to deliver the training. Course content is prescribed by the Teacher Training Agency (2003) and assessment is based on the achievement of three broad standards of which the first is *professional values and practice*. This is

referred to in this paper as Standard 1 (S1).

From 2005, the Teacher Training Agency has become the Training and Development Agency (TDA) - which has a wider remit, including the continuous professional development of those working in schools.

Issues arising from the international literature on professional standards

In a commentary on the influences shaping teacher education within the countries of Europe, Weiner (2002) argues that “professionalism” is one of five major European trends in the education and development of teachers. Writers such Buchberger et al, (2000) also highlight the importance of “professionalisation” in European teacher education. These authors assert that professionalism is being re-shaped in mainly Anglophone countries, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA by a variety of policies, for example the imposition of national standards, heightened surveillance and accountability.

While teacher education is firmly attached to the university sector in many countries, English teacher training is school-based and coupled with the Teacher Training Agency's (2003), TTA, “standards” discourse. The universities coordinate the training. The professional framework within which trainees operate complies with the General Teaching Council's code of professional values. This highlights key elements of professional practice: competence in the classroom; high expectations of all pupils; responsiveness to change; the legislative framework; the need for equality of opportunity and respect for human differences (GTC, 2005). The TTA framework was introduced in 1998 and subsequently converted into the “standards” regime in 2002 (DfES, 2002). The context for the research reported here is the debate about whether “standards” are changing trainees' concepts of teacher professionalism and the impact of *Professional Values and Practice* on trainees' attitudes towards professionalism.

Speculation about the impact of “new managerialist” (Fitzimmons, 2005) teaching discourses, such as “standards”, in Anglophone countries has centred on whether such discourse limits or guarantees professional autonomy (Bottery, 1996; Davies and Ferguson, 1997; Willumsen, 1998; Day, 1999; Mahony and Hextall, 2000; Patrick et al., 2003; Goodson 2004; Winch, 2004; Codd, 2005). A key theme is what constitutes professional knowledge, competency and capability (Eraut, 1996; Day, 1999). However Christie (2003) argues that no set of “standards” can adequately capture the complexity of teaching and to define “standard” narrowly is to detract from the professional status of teachers. A different view is taken by Nixon et al., (2001) who attempt to square the need for new forms of professionalism by arguing for an interpretation that seeks to reinforce relations between professionals and their “publics” and to ground the dialogue about education and learning. As a consequence “professionalism” is defined in terms of values and practice rather than status and regulation. The current research explores how the values and practice of “standards” are adopted to form an

expanded view of professionalism

It is recognised that there are different approaches to the issue of teacher professionalisation in Europe. In Portugal, Finland and Sweden the preferred strategy is to raise professional status, for example by bringing teacher education into the university and by empowering teachers through research (Kallos, 2003; Erixon-Arreman, 2005). Teachers in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece and the Netherlands continue to be trained and get their professional development in colleges outside the university sector. Clearly teacher development is shaped by particular policies, cultures and histories .The UK stands out among the European nations in its strong commitment to the values and practice of “New Public Management” (Fitzimmons, 2005) in reforming teacher education.

In an earlier study Holland (1999) investigated how the TTA framework was influencing trainees' perceptions of professionalism. The subject community was thought to be the key variable in forming notions of professionalism. However research into subject departments is scarce. Studies in the USA claim that subject departments are critical sites for teachers' practices (Siskens,1997). Visscher and Witziers (2004) have assessed the extent to which subject departments serve as professional communities in Dutch secondary schools. Subject departments operated as cohesive bodies regulating teacher behaviour but as professional communities they do not always focus on improving the quality of teaching. However Ball (1987), Imants et al. (2001) and Busher et al (2001) question whether a “true” professional community is a practical proposition for secondary schools. These writers claim that the unequal distribution of power and influence among teachers leads to the pursuit of personal needs as well as organisational goals. The influence of different cultures and values with different subject departments remains unresolved. The present study builds on Holland's (2005) earlier findings by identifying centres of influence in the initial teacher training programme and links between subject communities and levels of performance on the TTA standard *Professional Values and Practice*, S1.The study describes how professionalism is conceptualised in a group of trainees.

Research Questions

These were derived mainly from the international literature on professionalism and standards and also from the potential data collection opportunities available within the timeframe for the research January to July 2005.

- 1 To what extent does the teaching subject influence the development of the professional practice and values standard?
- 2 What is the relative importance of the centres of influence (e.g. university sessions, school placements, prior experience) in helping trainees to meet the standard and what are the problems in attempting to assess competency?
- 3 How do the different stakeholders involved in the development of teaching

professionals view the standard?

4 What are the implications for those involved in the training of teachers?

Methodology

Data were collected from secondary ITT subject areas English, mathematics, religious education (RE) and science. Three of these are core subjects in the English National Curriculum and RE was additionally chosen as it is a subject that explicitly addresses certain ethical issues.

Interviews were held with tutors responsible for teaching of each subject (two in each) - to obtain information about how each subject developed standard 1, the views of tutors on the standard and professionalism in teaching. The outcomes of these interviews were used to inform the next stage of data collection, namely from trainees.

Each of the subject groups (science N=51, Mathematics N=18, English N=19, Religious Studies N=16,) took part in a structured one - hour session midway through their one - year training, and after they had completed a 10 - week block of teaching in a secondary school. The sessions required trainees in groups of three to rank the 8 elements of the professional values and practice standard in terms of importance to them at this midpoint in their training. These rankings were then compared between the groups, displayed on a chart and discussed. A second exercise, completed individually, was to estimate which parts of their training had contributed the most to the development of the standard. Finally to explore their understanding of teaching as a profession they were invited to write a pen portrait of a lead professional in their subject, based on experience at their placement school - leading to an open discussion as to whether or not teaching was in fact an profession.

A similar exercise was also conducted at the end of year with mentors in each of the 4 subjects (mentors are responsible for the school - based training). During the mentor sessions we gathered data about the ranking of elements of standard 1, mentors' perceptions of grading of the standard for assessment purposes, and discussed the extent to which mentors' comments on summative reports at the end of a placement matched the grading. Running parallel to this was an analysis of mentor grades, and comments from summative report forms in each subject.

Findings

1 Relative importance of elements of Standard 1

The survey showed that university subject tutors, school subject mentors and secondary school trainees employed Standard 1 in different ways. Subject tutors used standards to promote key messages about the principles that underpinned teaching subjects. For example the English Course Leader considered that

“S1.1 and S1.4 are overarching standards - they are more generic”

and hence English tutors were expected to highlight issues such as “cultural sensitivity”, “linguistic awareness” and “inclusion”. Similarly a mathematics tutor argued that

“S1.7 is crucial for all teachers” and “S1.1 is important because of the subject’s history - we highlight multiculturalism, gender, background and culture and emphasise there must be no favourites”.

The implication was that subject tutors were initiating trainees into professional knowledge, were playing a key role in influencing views of professionalism and interpreting the standard in terms of the teaching subject. Trainees and school subject mentors were also concerned about key principles that underpin teaching. They agreed about the relative importance of S1.1, S1.2 and S1.3, taking the view that these elements represented overarching principles, whereas other elements were of secondary importance. Subject mentors were also concerned with the issue of “improvement” and thus attached more importance to “improving through self-evaluation”, S1.7. By contrast, the trainees attached less importance to the issue of “self evaluation”, which could imply that this group had a more passive view of the training process. In addition trainees tended to rate standard element S1.8 more highly, indicating a less mature understanding of professionalism. Subject mentors were more certain which elements were “least important”, viz, S1.5 and S1.8 suggesting that this group gave more weight to the subject rather than the wider school. The different weightings attached to the various element of Standard 1 posed the question whether there was consistency in grading.

2 Views of teacher professionalism

The previous discussion indicates that there was consensus on the relative importance of S1.1, S1.2 and S1.3, however it was unclear how this influenced ideas on teacher professionalism. As a result trainees were asked to write a few sentences on what it meant to be a “professional teacher”. The majority of the descriptions had a common theme “high expectations of the students, staff and the school”. For example:

“Having high expectations of all pupils, and pass on your subject knowledge in such a way that the student will be challenged and motivated academically and socially”

“Has very high expectations of students, both in terms of behaviour and achievement”

Others highlighted the notion that teachers should act as role models for their students, setting a good example:

“One who enables pupils to progress to the best of their ability and reach their full

potential. One who acts as a good role model to lead and inspire pupils...acting in loco parentis"

"To set a good example to students...develop good morals and values in the students"

A small minority saw Standard 1 as a major hurdle in the path leading to qualified teacher status:

"[A professional teacher is] someone who meets the standards for QTS status"

The survey was restricted to initial thoughts on the issue and it was unsafe to read too much into the data, nevertheless, some of the trainees provided comprehensive statements:

"[Being a professional] means considering pupil development both within a social and whole school context and well defined subject area. Teachers should genuinely care about the personal development of pupils...and provide tools for them to be all that they can be and afford them opportunities to raise their aspirations and create opportunities and create options for later life"

"A professional teacher is someone who strives to be the best they can. They are considerate, polite and punctual. The pupil comes first...and the aim is to enable learning to take place. A pupil's background, ability and potential are considered but does not hinder the teacher's ability. Good relationships are created between teacher and pupil which enable an appropriate learning environment for all concerned. This relationship remains within school but can sometimes lead to information being passed to other departments if the teacher learns of anything dangerous"

"Teaching is a way of life...the time spent in the classroom is the result of meticulous planning. A professional teacher also embodies all the qualities inherent in the word "professional"....courteous, thorough, diligent, calm, focused...It is important to convey these qualities to students, other teachers and to those outside the profession"

The researchers recognised the limits of such an exercise, but took the view that the responses revealed some of the thinking about teacher professionalism. It is clear that the standards discourse informed and framed the various perspectives on teacher professionalism. The descriptions invariably drew on the language of standards and this raised the question whether standards had become the lingua franca for understandings about professionalism. Had the official discourse "colonised" (Habermas's (1984;1987) notion of social action) the training lifeworld? However, it was also clear that some of the student teachers also were developing a deeper and more sophisticated notion of the 'professional' teacher than described only by Standard One. In particular many focused on the personal qualities of a professional teacher rather than the arid and supposedly more easily

measurable competences offered by the TTA.

3 Centres of influence

Trainees were asked to estimate as a percentage the amount of influence of various centres - past experience, university inputs, school placements and other sources - on understandings of *Professional Values and Practice*. The findings for a sample of Science, Maths, English and Religious Studies trainees are shown below:

Table 1 Centres of Influence (as percentages)

Centre of influence	Science (N=51)	Maths (N=18)	English (N=19)	RS (N=16)	Weighted mean
Past Experience	12	12	15	14	13
University subject inputs	10	13	11	12	11
University professional study inputs	10	7	8	8	9
University professional study follow up	7	6	5	6	6
First school placements	27	28	28	27	27
Second school placements	32	29	32	27	31
Other sources	2	6	3	6	3

The percentages are given for the different subjects are given to illustrate that there are no statistically significant differences between subjects for samples of these sizes. Indeed what is striking is the uniformity across subjects. It is clear that the student teachers consider their school placements as being of greatest influence. This may be in part due to the timing of the survey (in the middle or towards the end of their second placement). However, it is what would be expected from an apprenticeship model of teacher training in which new teachers are inducted into the teaching community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998) and where the school teachers and school - based mentors are important in developing a sense of teacher identity. Students have an interest in professional survival and therefore may appropriate the practice of and identify with the mentors as useful strategy in achieving QTS (Maynard 2001).

Nevertheless past experience - third behind the school placements - was a significant factor in influencing views of professionalism. However, the mean figure conceals the variety and range of responses in this area. For some of the

mature students following a second or even third career, clearly previous employment, voluntary work and life experience were significant factors. At the same time some of the trainees had come straight from school or college and so this was a much less significant influence.

The means for each centre do not highlight the variations within each subject for each centre of influence.

Table 2 Centres of Influence (as standard deviation)

Centre of influence	Science (N=51)	Maths (N=18)	English (N=19)	RE (N=16)
Past Experience	16.3	13.2	8.9	14.9
University subject inputs	6.8	6.9	6.1	9.5
University professional study inputs	7.1	5.1	5.0	6.9
University professional study follow up	5.6	4.8	4.2	3.4
First school placements	10.9	12.0	6.3	13.6
Second school placements	15.5	12.1	9.7	18.5
Other sources	7.7	12.4	5.6	15.4

Given the size of the mean, the standard deviation for past experience indicates a wide variation in the importance of this centre particularly for mathematics, science and English students. For example, 31 students indicated it was either 0% or 5% of the influence but 2 students considered it contributed 50% and 1 considered it as having 90% influence. Clearly, the complexity of the relationship between previous experience, existing identity and concepts of professionalism, requires greater study through additional research methods. It should be further noted that some of the variation for first and second placement schools was between these two factors. Where the two factors are aggregated the overall level of variation is lower, again underlining the extent to which placement schools were overwhelmingly the most important factors.

4 Conceptions of the lead professional

The previous discussion highlights the importance of the “lead professional” within the training process. Trainees were asked to list four characteristics of the “lead professional”. The most frequently quoted qualities included excellent subject knowledge (15%); approachable and friendly (15%); well organised (14%); committed (11%); fair (10%); high expectations of staff and pupils (9%); demands respect (8%); enthusiastic (7%); open to change (6%) and caring (6%). Pen

portraits allowed the participants to place their choice within the context of on - the - job training. For example:

"This teacher has excellent subject knowledge and confidence in their own ability. As a result he gets respect from the pupils....extremely well organised and efficient...tends to have excellent knowledge of educational initiatives, practices and procedures. I feel his presence is completed by the way he presents himself to his classes and his general approach to all students"

"He is head of department and has been teaching for over 25 years. He clearly adapts his teaching styles to suit different pupils with a variety of learning styles. He treats pupils with respect and genuinely cares for their well-being. Listens and accepts ideas from new and established teachers and other staff regarding lesson delivery and pupil support. He accepts that he is still learning"

"30 years of experience. Head of Special Needs. She is committed to ensuring that every student learns. She is calm and courteous and showed high standards of planning and preparation. She is meticulous, creates an excellent environment where learning is valued and pupils feel it is "good" to learn"

All of the participants chose someone from their school placements. This highlighted the important part that school mentors had in forming the trainees' views on professionalism and developing ideas on what it means to be a professional teacher. While the portraits tended to mirror the official discourse, their tone suggested other discourses, such as a particular school, subject and staffroom could also influence trainees' views on what it means to be a lead professional.

5 The Assessment of Standard 1 by mentors

The main responsibility for grading in semester two lies with the mentor. University tutors play a moderating role. Grading is clearly a complex process with the grading not necessarily representing some objective measure of the beginning teacher's ability to teach or even to meet the particular competences. Since the introduction of the standards framework we were not aware of any research on how mentors derive the students' grades. Evidence from discussion with mentors in this study demonstrates that elements of the standards are weighted differently by different mentors. Moreover there is some indication that the factors that are not included directly in the standards are taken into account. Clearly further research is called for on the process of grading. In this analysis of the grades, however, the difference in grades between students should not necessarily be taken as an indication of a difference in some quasi objective notion of ability or performance.

Trainees are ranked on a grade of 1 to 4, 1 being highest grade for excellent competence in the standard. Therefore the lower the number in the following discussion, the more favourably the trainee is looked on by the mentor. The notion of grading on such a scale is problematic, but one that is explored regularly with

mentors during training sessions

Grade 1 Very good with several outstanding features

Grade 2 Good with no significant weaknesses

Grade 3 Adequate but requires further development

Grade 4 Not yet met the standard

In addition some grades were given as indicating a mid point between two grades, e.g. 2 to 3, in this case the higher grade was taken. Where grades were incomplete the trainee was eliminated from the sample. In 2004/05 Standard One (S1) was recorded as item A on the university's recording sheet with other sets of standards labelled B to F.

Table of mean grades awarded to trainees for Standard 1

Subject	No trainees	A	B	C	D	E	F	A-F	B-F	A as percentage of B-F
Maths	45	1.56	1.71	1.80	1.89	1.58	2.02	1.76	1.80	0.86
Science	59	1.59	1.88	1.76	1.92	1.61	1.95	1.78	1.82	0.87
English	26	1.42	1.65	1.35	1.65	1.50	1.96	1.59	1.62	0.88
RE	12	1.92	1.58	1.83	1.83	1.33	1.92	1.74	1.70	1.13

Grades for main subject English were generally numerically lower in all areas. One possible explanation for this is that in the UK currently there is generally a shortage of applicants for teacher training courses. However at Sheffield Hallam University the English course is heavily oversubscribed unlike the other courses. Higher selection criteria may have a bearing on students' eventual grading on professional standards. On the other hand mentors in English may be more generous when interpreting the grading criteria or the nature of the subject and previous higher education experience provides some advantage in achieving a very good grade.

In maths, science and English, average grade on S1 is lower than the grade in for other standards (B-F). There is consistency across these subjects with the grade for professional values being on average approximately 0.2 lower than for other standards. However in RE, the grade on S1 is higher than for other standards. We note that the sample size for RE is smaller. Nevertheless it may be that RE mentors are more demanding in assessing the achievement in S1 than other subjects, possibly due to the particular responsibility the RE teachers have for teaching in the area of values.

There is some evidence that mentors view S1 differently from other standards as apart from RE; it appears to be somewhat easier to achieve a very good grade relation to achievement in other standards. Thus there is evidence that S1 is viewed differently by mentors.

Gender differences

S1

Female	No trainees	A	B	C	D	E	F	Mean A-F	Mean B-F	S1 as percentage of B-F
Maths	19	1.47	1.53	1.68	1.79	1.47	1.84	1.63	1.66	0.89
Science	33	1.45	1.85	1.58	1.82	1.45	1.88	1.67	1.72	0.85
English	18	1.33	1.61	1.28	1.61	1.39	1.78	1.50	1.53	0.87
RE	7	1.86	1.43	1.57	1.86	1.29	1.86	1.64	1.60	1.16

Male	No trainees	A	B	C	D	E	F	Mean	Mean B-F	S1 as percentage of B-F
Maths	26	1.62	1.85	1.88	1.96	1.65	2.15	1.85	1.90	0.85
Science	26	1.77	1.92	2.00	2.04	1.81	2.04	1.93	1.96	0.90
English	8	1.63	1.75	1.50	1.75	1.75	2.38	1.79	1.83	0.89
RE	5	2.00	1.80	2.20	1.80	1.40	2.00	1.87	1.84	1.09

An analysis of grades by subject shows that in all subjects females are awarded lower (representing higher achievement) grades than males, on average in the range 0.22-.29. This factor explains one reason why, overall, English grades are closer to grade 1 than in other subject areas as there were more women following this course. The issue of gender in relation to professionalism was not one that we anticipated in this study, but clearly calls for further investigation, as does the more general issue of difference in grading between genders across all standards.

Discussion of key findings in relation to research questions and literature

It is clear that the TTA training regime focuses attention on the core task of teaching, such as selecting content well, motivating pupils to learn and adapting to the needs of different pupils, within a subject. As a result Standards S2 “Knowledge and Understanding”, S3.1 “Planning”, S3.2 Monitoring and Assessment and S3.3 “Teaching and Classroom” are key markers. The assumption is that trainees imbibe “Professional Values and Beliefs” through the delivery of subject knowledge and by following “lead professionals” during the school placements. This raises a number of issues. The study showed that the trainees achieved understandings of “Professional Values and Beliefs”. The question is whether training could do more to encourage the trainees to take a critical look at their own preconceptions, refine their own understandings and accommodate different school cultures in developing “good teaching”? Butroyd (2005) and Attard and Armour (2005) argue that critical awareness is the key characteristic of “professionalism” and teachers need the capacity to respond to new challenges and events that create the environment in which they work. Similarly Younger et al (2004) call on teacher educators to frame courses that have a range of contexts

which encourage beginning teachers to think more critically about how they operate as teachers. The University's *Career Preparation Profile* requires the trainees to demonstrate "continuous growth" as they encounter a new culture, for example in the second placement. This raises the question whether growth can be measured in the case of "expectations", "commitment", "values" and "attitudes". These are the qualities that underpin the "core" of *Professional Values and Practice*. The assessment of S1.1, S1.2 and S1.3 presents a particular challenge. Grudnoff and Tuck (2002) observe that graduates who have become "savvy teachers" select, prioritise what needs to be addressed and what needs to be let go. Our study suggests that the University needs to explore further the issue of growth of professional values and beliefs with the subject mentors. This implies addressing several issues: interpretation of S1; inconsistencies in grading; recognising the difference between "continuous growth" and "progress" and "improvement" and the use of made of the Career Preparation Profile. Some commentators such as Codd (2005) make the case that teachers' sense of professionalism should not be constrained by the "new managerialist" framework but also be directed towards the achievement of social justice. The TTA's "standards" do not support such an overtly political stance. Nevertheless, they do allow for higher education tutors and partner schools to promote the notion of training within an open and reflective learning community. This may give the ground within which a more critical form of professionalism can be developed .

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