

# Standards Framework for Teachers and School Leaders

Prepared by Muavia Gallie and  
James Keevy



The Commonwealth



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# Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>Acknowledgements</b>   | iii |
| <b>1. Introduction</b>  | 1   |
| <b>2. Background</b>  | 2   |
| 2.1 Professional standards for teachers and school leaders: key issues          | 3   |
| 2.2 International debates on professional standards                             | 4   |
| 2.3 Current state of professional standards                                     | 6   |
| 2.3.1 Overall   | 6   |
| 2.3.2 Minimum qualifications  | 6   |
| 2.3.3 Quality assurance   | 7   |
| 2.3.4 Professional standards  | 7   |
| 2.3.5 Monitoring and assessment   | 7   |
| 2.3.6 Professional teaching councils  | 7   |
| 2.3.7 School leadership   | 7   |
| 2.3.8 Unique cultural context   | 8   |
| 2.3.9 Other matters   | 8   |
| 3.1 Key issues from the combined workshop                                       | 9   |
| 3.1.1 Commonwealth, regional and national levels of professional standards      | 9   |
| <b>3. Developing the standards framework</b>                                    | 9   |
| 3.1.2 The inclusion of an entry level   | 10  |
| 3.1.3 Understand the limits of what can be achieved with professional standards | 10  |
| 3.1.4 Developmental purpose   | 10  |
| 3.1.5 Lessons from Jamaica and Maldives   | 11  |
| 3.1.6 Professional learning and professional development                        | 11  |
| 3.1.7 Common platform   | 11  |
| 3.1.8 Pilots and validation of standards  | 11  |
| 3.2 Options for development and implementation of professional standards        | 11  |
| 3.3 Essential enabling conditions and factors for successful implementation     | 13  |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 3.4 Key relationship issues related to development and management of professional standards | 14 |
| <b>4. Concluding comments</b>   | 16 |
| <b>Resource materials</b>   | 18 |

## List of Tables and Figures



|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 2.1 Professional knowledge, practice and commitment           | 7  |
| Table 3.1 Professional standards and levels of proficiency          | 12 |
| Figure 2.1 Labour and professional conversations                    | 5  |
| Figure 3.1 Commonwealth standards framework levels of specification | 11 |

# 1. Introduction

The Commonwealth Secretariat initiated a consultative and participatory process in 2011 to develop a broad pan-Commonwealth framework for professional standards for teachers and school leaders. The main purpose of the proposed standards framework is to guide countries in defining the basic requirements related to knowledge, pedagogical skills and personal attributes that teachers and school leaders must demonstrate in order to achieve the objectives of education.

This standards framework draws on extensive work facilitated by the Commonwealth Secretariat between 2011 and 2013:

- First regional workshop on professional standards for teachers and school leaders took place in Southern Africa<sup>1</sup>, held in Mauritius from 20 to 24 June 2011 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2011).
- Second regional workshop took place in the South Pacific<sup>2</sup>, held in Apia, Samoa, from 28 May to 1 June 2012 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2012).
- Parallel process in the Caribbean region, driven by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Council for Human and Social Development and supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat – this process focused on, among other matters, the development of regional academic and professional standards for teachers, as well as the establishment of a CARICOM Council for Teaching and Teacher Education (CARICOM

<sup>1</sup> Participating countries from Southern Africa and one from Asia were: Botswana, The Gambia, Lesotho, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone and Swaziland.

<sup>2</sup> Participating countries from the South Pacific were: Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Task Force for Teaching and Teacher Education 2011).

- Final, inter-regional workshop was held in South Africa<sup>3</sup> (27 to 30 May 2013) where the outcomes from the three regional consultations were revisited and the combined learnings integrated into a standards framework for teachers and school leaders.

This document contains the integrated standards framework for teachers and school leaders developed between 2011 and 2013, as well as a set of methodological guidelines for the development and implementation of professional standards. While this document provides a brief overview of the combined workshop where the draft standards framework was discussed, it is not intended to be a report of the workshop itself.

The document is structured according to the following sections:

- Introduction and background – a brief summary of the key issues emerging from the various consultations is included here; the reader is referred to the original reports for more detailed discussions.
- Revisiting of the draft standards framework – the key issues identified at the combined workshop held in South Africa in May 2013.
- Concluding comments.

The following two sections are included as annexes so that they can be distributed and consulted upon separately:

- Annex 1: The standards framework
- Annex 2: Methodological guidelines

<sup>3</sup> Participating countries were: Botswana, Jamaica, Lesotho, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, and Trinidad and Tobago.

## 2. Background

Various Commonwealth reports on the performance of member countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in education, and the Education for All (EFA) goals, stress a remarkable progress recorded over recent years in expanding education and training opportunities, with specific focus on access to education in the Commonwealth. Despite the improvement in access, the throughput of students and the quality of the achievements remain a common concern across and beyond the Commonwealth, as noted in the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012 (UNESCO 2012). In this regard, the 16th, 17th and 18th Commonwealth Conferences of Education Ministers have emphasised the need to provide good quality training and development for teachers to meet the needs of education at all levels; and to give more attention to the issues of school leadership and governance in our efforts to attain quality education at school level. Numerous research reports have asserted the close link between the quality of education in a country and the quality of the teachers within the system. The focus of this particular directive by the ministers was to advance education in small and island states through a variety of capacity-building and research activities.

With the rapid progress in the expansion of the education systems, most Commonwealth countries are confronted with the need to sustain the quantity achievements while improving the quality of teaching and learning. The role of schools as learning and development centres has become critical in the context of rapid enrolment growth. In turn, the capacity of teachers and their supervisors, particularly the school leaders, in facilitating effective teaching and learning processes highly depends on the extent to which enabling structures and systems are in place and operational. Among the required essential

transformative structures are: (i) pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes, curricula and their practical relevance with regard to professional skills and competencies that are required in the classroom, and (ii) the availability of high-quality and relevant supporting learning materials such as teachers' guides and other resources/materials that constitute fundamental conditions for quality improvement.

Many Commonwealth countries have sought to address the education quality imperative through innovative approaches aimed at recognising and promoting teaching as a profession. In this regard, the 1966 International Labour Organization (ILO)/UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Teachers stresses that 'teaching should be regarded as a profession. It is a form of public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study; it also calls for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of all pupils in their charge.'

In pursuing the purpose of building a competent teaching force, governments – through ministries of education – have taken steps to issue regulations on professional standards for teachers and, in some cases, for head teachers/school principals (school leaders). The national spectrum of this process is diverse. Many Commonwealth countries have developed their professional standards frameworks; some are in the process; and a considerable group of countries is confronted with the challenge of setting their professional standards as part of the global education reforms under way. It should be noted, however, that even for those member countries that have put in place professional standards, the implementation, support, monitoring and evaluation remain complex and challenging steps in the process.

In response to this identified need for support to Commonwealth countries in developing professional standards for teachers and school leaders, the Commonwealth Secretariat initiated a consultative and participatory process to develop a broad pan-Commonwealth standards framework to guide countries in defining the basic requirements related to knowledge, pedagogical skills and personal attributes that teachers and school leaders must demonstrate in order to achieve the objectives of education.

Alongside this process of developing the pan-Commonwealth framework for professional standards for teachers and school leaders, the Commonwealth Secretariat is also facilitating the design of a school leadership capability framework that is focusing specifically on school principals and system leaders. The school leadership capability framework is based on the understanding that effective leadership development is very unlikely to be the product of one-off training and development workshops. Instead, its design is based on the best available evidence regarding relevant leadership knowledge and capabilities, delivered in a variety of modes with ongoing support, and directed towards the achievement of a single compelling objective that is most likely to result in the development of highly effective leadership practices in schools and systems. It is therefore important that the two processes should be seen as complementary, and intended to improve the quality of education at both systems and operational levels.

The proposed standards framework contained in this document attempts to achieve the following:

- lay the foundation for developing or enhancing pre-service, in-service and continuing professional development;
- assist teachers in self-assessment of their competencies, from which they can develop their learning and training plans to consolidate their professional qualifications;
- lay the foundation for monitoring and evaluating teachers' professional growth and learning;

- support the planning, deployment and utilisation of teachers and school leaders; and
- act as the basis to propose policies towards a competent qualified teaching force.

## 2.1 Professional standards for teachers and school leaders: key issues

The key issues pertaining to professional standards for teachers and school leaders are located within three broad strands, namely: (i) the overarching driver or intention of the debate, (ii) the specific issues related to the teaching profession, and (iii) the specific issues related to school leaders in education.

First, it is important to know and understand why the debate around professional standards surfaces within a country. Currently, countries are attempting to solve different challenges in their education systems using the instrument of professional standards. The purposes can be divided into four broad areas, namely: (i) professional qualifications, (ii) professional ethics and conduct, (iii) professional development, and (iv) professional growth and learning among teachers and school leaders. Although these four areas are not linear in nature, the development pathway of the teaching force into a profession requires the systematic movement from (i) to (iv). The debates can be dominated by a 'conditions of service' or 'labour' conversation, or by a 'professional' conversation (Gallie 2006). The difference between these two is either a 'lowest common denominator' argument, which will lead to the lowest possible issues that can be agreed upon by different stakeholders within the conversations; or 'best practice', which is the best possible appropriate practice expected in order to improve the education system (see Figure 2.1). In this regard it is more useful to argue that the focus on one type of conversation, either labour or professional, demands a trade-off with the other. For example, if more focus is placed on professional development, a reduction in the basic concern of the conditions of service of your members will result. Following this argument, teacher unions will first focus on the conditions

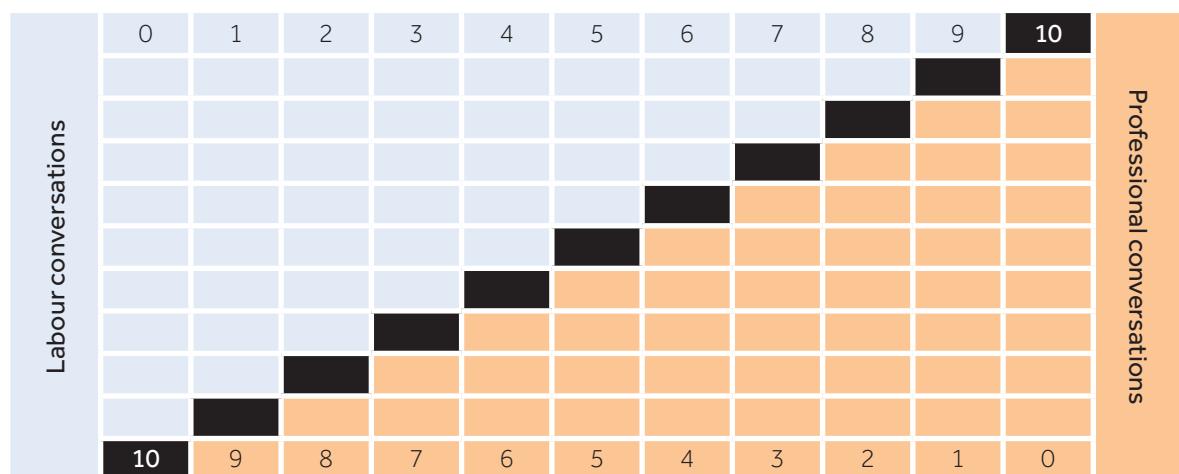
of service of their members, before they move towards the professional conversations, since in relation to Bloom's Taxonomy the basic needs have to be met first.

Second, the professional standards can be used to address entry requirement challenges such as recruitment and selection; initial training and development (pre-service) requirements, such as induction and mentoring; and continuous professional development (CPD) requirements. Specific controversies in this approach include particularly the licensing and/or de-licensing of teachers. Furthermore, inappropriate ethical and professional conduct processes that are included in the conditions of service of most teachers, and which can be very cumbersome, get circumvented through the use of professional standards.<sup>4</sup>

Third, professional standards can be used to determine additional entry requirements on promotion positions such as for school leaders. In this case, the professional standards are used to meet additional requirements in an integrated manner, rather than including the professional requirements on top of the academic requirements for the position.

<sup>4</sup> Bloom's Taxonomy is a classification of learning objectives within education proposed in 1956 by a committee of educators chaired by Benjamin Bloom.

**Figure 2.1 Labour and professional conversations**



## 2.2 International debates on professional standards

There has been a move towards promoting the professionalism of teachers through the development of professional standards both internationally and in individual countries. In 2001, Australia established a project known as the Quality Teachers Initiative, Teachers for the 21st Century, in order to develop a set of standards for future development. This project was used to establish a credential level of 'Highly Accomplished Teachers'.

In some cases, it is thought that professional standards in education are the answer to all the problems and challenges in the education system. While they may provide developmental principles for the teaching profession, they cannot solve the problems associated with:

- dysfunctional school organisations;
- outmoded curricula;
- inequitable allocation of resources; or
- lack of school support for children and youth (Darling-Hammond 1999: 39).

It seems to follow that when a framework of standards by which teachers can exhibit professionalism and competencies is provided, the quality of teaching and teachers should increase (Thrapp 2006). Thrapp argues that this is not the case and that the public and professional

appeal of professional standards may be politically exploited and may serve as a way of controlling teachers. Sachs (2003: 185) supports this idea that professional standards have been used as a 'government imposed regulatory framework' over the teaching profession, mainly because teaching accreditation and licensing rely on teachers attaining the credentials. Ingvarson and Chadbourne (both cited in Sachs 2003) further argue that the introduction of professional standards should improve teacher performance, improve the standards of teaching and contribute to the standing of the teaching profession.

Professional standards are thought to provide accountability to the recipients of education and potentially represent a level of quality or at least an assessment of quality. However, Sachs (2003) argues that it is doubtful that the introduction of professional standards to the teaching profession can influence the public's perception of the teaching profession given that many people have developed their own opinion of what constitutes a good teacher, based on their personal experience of the education system.

Obviously, professional standards provide a framework that teachers can use as a measure of their accomplishments and a way of providing evidence to stakeholders of their achievements and accreditation (Sachs 2003). There have been numerous terms applied to the teacher evaluation process, such as supervision, annual performance review, assessment, appraisal, inspection, etc. (Collinson et al. 2009). What professional standards attempt to achieve is an accountability that is powerful, meaning that teachers 'get on with it', 'find solutions', 'own it' and 'acknowledge reality', rather than a powerless accountability that is based on 'being unaware', 'blaming others', 'finding excuses', and 'waiting and hoping' that someone will solve some of the problems.

The professional standards may be generic or specific: generic being a broad set of descriptors that teachers can aspire to or hope to achieve, whereas specific standards are more explicit and can allow assessors to evaluate teachers' performance in relation to a set of descriptors (Thrupp 2006). Thrupp (2006: 3) suggests that

the specific standards have a much greater capacity to 'control and contain teachers' by intensifying their workload, yet potentially resulting in few improvements in teaching quality as teachers could fabricate evidence in order to jump through hoops to meet the requirements. This type of process is precisely in conflict with the initial purpose or intention of professional standards, meaning a process of professionalising teaching away from treating teachers as supervised workers rather than skilled experts (Collinson et al. 2009). The importance of teachers being skilled in their academic and professional knowledge and having the ability to impart that knowledge in an ethical, appropriate and engaging manner is what professional standards are all about. The article published by Sachs (2005), with the appropriate title: 'Teacher professional standards: A policy strategy to control, regulate or enhance the teaching profession?', is as relevant to the current debate as it was when it was written.

The Australian agenda on professional standards has extended into a framework of specific teacher capabilities (see Table 2.1). But this framework comes from within the teaching profession, rather than being imposed by those outside of education. As Hayes (2006: 14) argues, 'standards for the profession should be developed primarily by teachers for teachers, though in collaborative ways with stakeholders in the education community. They should be developed within a discourse of the profession, not imposed on the profession by others.'

The debate on professional standards is no longer driven by country-based issues and needs alone, but rather by global organisations and structures. Inevitably, the experience and expectations of developed countries will put pressure on developing and under-developed countries to follow their lead. It may be more appropriate to argue that developing and under-developed countries, including small states, will be able to achieve the intended goals of Education for All, but not necessarily following the same direction and pathway as developed countries. Most of the solutions from developing countries are capital-intensive strategies which

**Table 2.1 Professional knowledge, practice and commitment**

| Professional knowledge               | Professional practice                   | Professional commitment |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| • Content knowledge                  | • Planning for learning                 | • Professional learning |
| • Student knowledge                  | • Creating a learning environment       | • Engagement            |
| • Knowledge of teaching and learning | • Assessment and evaluation of learning | • Leadership            |
|                                      |   | • Values                |
|                                      |   | • Relationships         |
|                                      |   | • Ethics                |

developing and under-developed countries will struggle to implement, let alone achieve. Furthermore, huge input- and process-costs must be borne before there are benefits in terms of output.

## 2.3 Current state of professional standards

### 2.3.1 Overall

The key debates across the countries are remarkably similar, mostly focusing on the improvement of quality within their education and training systems. Most countries in Southern Africa, the Caribbean and South Pacific are at an early stage in the move towards the establishment of a teacher/teaching council and professional teacher standards. In this regard, it is important to note that the consultations have acted as a catalyst to raise awareness of the importance of professional standards. A case in point is that following the Mauritius and Samoa workshops, in 2011 and 2012 respectively, Maldives and Samoa have made progress in this area: Samoa has already completed the development of professional standards and the process is well on track in Maldives as per the information shared in Pretoria.

It was, however, evident that small states in both regions experience unique challenges, and that

island states and continental states are also very different. In addition, the context within post-conflict countries should be understood, as in Sierra Leone where an over-awareness of individual and group rights exists at present.

All the regions raised concerns about the continued pressure to catch up with the rest of the world in many areas of teacher education and professionalism. In this regard, the importance of local values and cultures was emphasised, more so the risk of downplaying these in favour of foreign models.

The need to cater for migrant teachers is a major challenge in the South Pacific and, to some extent, also in the Caribbean. The proximity of the islands to the United States and Canada, Australia and New Zealand results in significant teacher movement and the need to recognise qualifications.

### 2.3.2 Minimum qualifications

The minimum teacher qualifications vary greatly between the participating countries<sup>5</sup>, ranging from teacher certificates and/or diplomas to four-year degree qualifications, and academic qualifications combined with professional postgraduate qualifications. An important

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<sup>5</sup> See the introductory section to this report for a list of all countries that were involved in this initiative.

observation from the reports is that the reality on the ground is that policy prescriptions are often not adhered to. An increase in the minimum standards of qualifications for teachers and school leaders is also evident across the countries.

### **2.3.3 Quality assurance**

Participating countries provided limited information on the quality assurance systems related to professional requirements for teachers and school leaders, including for recruitment and selection, initial training and development, induction and mentoring, in-service training and CPD. A strong focus on the quality assurance of recruitment processes, as well as the use of inspectorate systems, was also evident across most countries. In some cases, expatriate teachers are required to meet additional requirements before they can teach.

### **2.3.4 Professional standards**

It was evident from the country reports that very few countries in Southern Africa had developed professional standards for teachers, let alone professional standards for school leaders. Namibia is the exception in this group of countries, but even in this case it is evident that much still needs to be done to move from the policy promulgation phase to the implementation level. All 11 countries represented at the Mauritius consultation reported being actively involved in professional standards discussion or development. Evidence of professional registration requirements for teachers was limited, with many countries indicating the desire to register teachers, but with very few actually doing so at present. Lesotho is an exception, reporting that its teachers are required to register with the Lesotho Teaching Council. An overarching tendency towards employment conditions, illustrated by a focus on academic qualifications for employment purposes, was also evident across the countries.

In the South Pacific, the trend was quite different. Most countries in this region

reported making progress towards professional standards at least on a policy level, with several examples being made available during the workshop. Evidence of implementation was limited, however. The influence of neighbouring Australia and New Zealand was very evident in the examples. The tendency towards employment conditions was also less evident in the Pacific, although some elements could be discerned.

### **2.3.5 Monitoring and assessment**

Performance management systems were reported as being in place in most countries. The traditional inspectorate model is still dominant, while the focus on both internal and external accountability, notably in Botswana, is encouraging.

### **2.3.6 Professional teaching councils**

All Southern African countries reported either being in the process of establishing, or already having, a professional teaching council. In most countries, however, the professional development function still resides with teacher unions or the Ministry of Education (or its equivalent). A common response was that a final draft on legislation enabling the establishment of a teaching council was in the process, often with the decision-making/legislating body (e.g. in Botswana, Seychelles and Swaziland). Countries with existing councils include Lesotho and The Gambia. In some instances, a higher education council was reported as being involved in teacher professional development, such as in Namibia. South Pacific countries reported significantly less progress in the setting up of teaching councils. Caribbean countries can probably be regarded as the most advanced in their progress towards setting up teaching councils (CARICOM Secretariat 2012).

### **2.3.7 School leadership**

Significant government control over the recruitment of school leaders was evident. While there is agreement that clear and objective

professional selection criteria are required, more can be done to implement such criteria across the countries. In some instances, the introduction of performance-based contracts is taking place. The minimum competencies required of principals are generally being increased, in some cases to a Master's degree level and up to six years' experience (often misinterpreted as years of service). Specialised training for school leaders was not well reported and appears to be limited across the countries. The strong influence of discriminating factors such as political affiliation, regionalism, tribalism, religion and 'old student syndrome' was also noted, more acutely so in post-conflict situations.

### **2.3.8 Unique cultural context**

Countries in the South Pacific paid particular emphasis to the cultural context of the region. The development of unique profiles in Tonga was used as an example of how cultural context could be accommodated in professional standards. These include the Attributes of Tonga Teachers (*Faiako Ma'a Tonga*) and Building a House of Learning for Tonga Teachers (*Langa Fale Ako Framework*):

The vision of the Tonga teacher is to teach for Tonga. The vision – albeit simple, is reflective of multiple layers of values and core beliefs about being Tongan, about Tongan philosophy of education and about Tongan notions of development.

### **2.3.9 Other matters**

A wide range of aspects indirectly related to teacher and school leader professional standards were reported by countries. These included the lack of teachers in sub-Saharan Africa, ghost teachers, concerns about large youth populations in countries and teachers switching jobs.

The need for improved intra-regional collaboration in both Southern Africa and the South Pacific was recognised, but more acutely so in the Pacific. Despite the progress in developing regional professional teacher standards in the Pacific (with support from

UNESCO) countries had not sufficiently collaborated to integrate the regional process on national levels. The Caribbean region, on the other hand, provided a good example of how effective regional collaboration can benefit member countries and the region as a whole.

# 3. Developing the standards framework

## 3.1 Key issues from the combined workshop

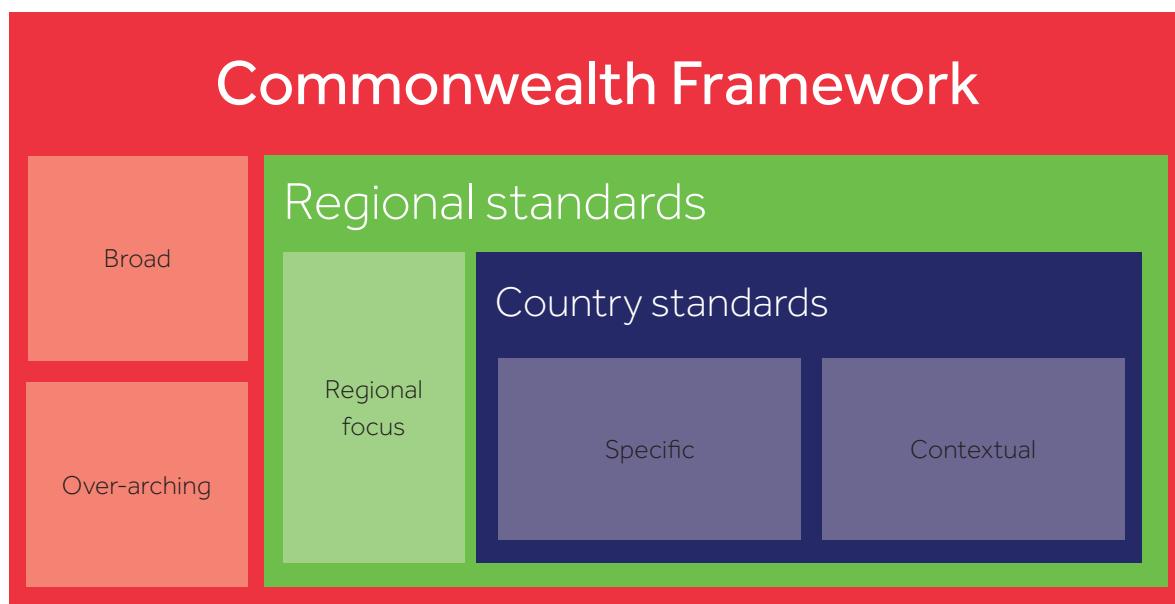
In 2011 the Commonwealth Secretariat began a consultative and participatory process to develop a pan-Commonwealth framework for professional standards for teachers and school leaders. This included two regional workshops, one held in Southern Africa in June 2011 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2011), and the other in the South Pacific in May 2012 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2012). A parallel process in the Caribbean region, driven by the CARICOM Council for Human and Social Development, also took place around the same time (Caribbean Community Task Force for Teacher Education 2013). In May 2013, an inter-regional workshop was held in South Africa where the outcomes of the three regional consultations were revisited and the combined learnings integrated into the standards framework for teachers and school leaders that is attached to this document.

Several important issues were identified during the combined workshop that are worth noting.

### 3.1.1 Commonwealth, regional and national levels of professional standards

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, the level of specification in the Commonwealth standards framework is broad and over-arching in order for regions and countries to use this as a guide. Regional standards, such as developed by CARICOM, have a distinct regional focus, while country standards are very specific and contextualised for the specific country. These relationships are important to keep in mind when developing standards to ensure optimal use. A related point is that all three levels of standards are not necessarily applicable to all countries and regions. In some cases, a country may opt to adapt the Commonwealth standards framework on a country level, while, in others, regional standards may suffice. The main purpose of the Commonwealth standards framework is to guide countries (and in some cases, also regions) in defining the basic requirements related to the knowledge, skills and attributes that teachers and school leaders should demonstrate.

**Figure 3.1 Commonwealth standards framework levels of specification**



### 3.1.2 The inclusion of an entry level

The draft standards framework, as discussed during the review meeting in South Africa, was based on the acquisition of competences across three levels:

- Initial – for newly-qualified teachers with limited experience, as well as more experienced teachers with limited professional development;
- Proficient – for qualified teachers that are able to demonstrate professional skills and attributes; and
- Distinguished – for qualified teachers that are able to demonstrate advanced levels of professional ethics and values, leadership as well as own professional learning.

Table 3.1 below provides an indicative overview of the professional standards that carry the most emphasis across the different levels of proficiency:

During the review of the draft Commonwealth standards framework, the inclusion of an entry level for un- and under-qualified teachers (below Initial) was debated at length. It was agreed that such a decision be left to countries and/or regions rather than including it in the standards framework. This decision was based on the importance of advocating for the professionalisation of teaching by avoiding the inclusion of para-professionals and unqualified teachers in minimum professional standards.

**Table 3.1 Professional standards and levels of proficiency**

|             | Category of professional standard                    | Initial | Proficient | Distinguished |
|-------------|--|---------|------------|---------------|
| Pre-service | Professional knowledge                               | ***     | **         | *             |
| In-service  | Professional skills and practices                    | **      | ***        | **            |
|             | Professional ethics, values and attributes           | **      | **         | ***           |
|             | Professional leadership, community and relationships | *       | **         | ***           |
|             | Professional learning                                | *       | **         | ***           |

Note: \*\*\* most relevant, \*\* relevant, \*less relevant

### 3.1.3 Understand the limits of what can be achieved with professional standards

It was again noted that professional standards are ineffective in addressing broad systemic challenges, such as weaknesses in initial teacher training, school effectiveness, and incentives. Professional standards can rather be used to address entry requirement challenges like recruitment and selection, and initial training and development (pre-service) requirements such as induction and mentoring, and CPD requirements. The need for countries and regions to have realistic expectations was emphasised, as well as the need to see professional standards within the context of a broader set of strategies that may be employed to address systemic challenges.

### 3.1.4 Developmental purpose

The standards framework has been designed as a developmental tool to allow for progression within the teaching profession. The framework should not be used as a punitive measure through which teachers on the lower levels are disadvantaged, such as when levels are linked to progression and incentive schemes. Using the framework for punitive purposes will be falling into the trap of advancing the labour conversations at the expense of the professional conversations.

### 3.1.5 Lessons from Jamaica and Maldives

Two countries, Jamaica and Maldives, have progressed with the implementation of professional teacher standards. They were given the opportunity to share specific lessons with the workshop participants. Key lessons that are important to note also for the Commonwealth standards framework include the following:

- Standards should be negotiated and not imposed.
- Consultations take place at various levels (universities, schools, education departments).
- A technical working committee (and related sub-committees) plays an important role in keeping the process moving forward.
- Standards should also focus on the social well-being of teachers.
- A framework for a professional council should be developed.

### 3.1.6 Professional learning and professional development

It was decided to combine some of the standards contained in the original sets developed in the regional workshops. The close relationship between professional learning (engaging in a continuum of professional growth opportunities, but with an emphasis on self-actualisation) and professional development (active participation in personal growth) resulted in these two standards being combined. The concern was expressed that the combination would dilute the emphasis on self-actualisation and, as a proactive measure, care should be taken to include descriptors with such an emphasis.

### 3.1.7 Common platform

Commonwealth Connects was demonstrated as an online platform through which the community of practice could be further developed across the various countries involved.

### 3.1.8 Pilots and validation of standards

It was agreed that the standards framework should be validated through a series of pilots. Evaluation instruments will be developed for use during the pilots. It was also proposed that international agencies (such as UNESCO and the ILO), regional agencies (such as the Association for the Development of Education in Africa), regional economic communities and individual experts be involved where possible. Funding for the piloting of the standards was raised as a matter that would also need some attention.

## 3.2 Options for development and implementation of professional standards

The methodological and paradigmatic approaches presented in this section are located within the domain of empowerment, and more specifically, self-empowerment. By this, we mean a professional standards construction process that allows teachers and school leaders to take charge of their own life, in their workplace, with their colleagues, with those who rely on them for support and direction, with their seniors, with their own mind, thinking processes and decision-making. This process allows them to care for themselves and others. Often, we don't fully understand how to achieve self-empowerment or even what it means. Through changing pre-existing thought patterns and pursuing self-empowerment, individuals do not give away their power or allow others to control them. Instead, they own who they are, make peace with those things they can't change, go all out to change what they can and stop being victims of circumstance.

The victim mentality leads to separatism and discriminatory ideas of what people can and cannot do and/or achieve. We tend to cluster in our own space and cage, and will be suspicious of people who are different from us, even if they look like us. This type of behaviour leads to quietism that hampers the ability to change our situation and circumstances, and lowers our self-esteem. And because we can't live up to our own standards, we tend to pull everyone else down

to a point that justifies our level of performance. It often goes with the protection of our own power and privileges, and these behaviours and feelings are linked to experiences that date back to colonial times, but still have a grip on us. In order to overcome these behaviours and feelings, we need to undergo a hard process of healing, forgiving ourselves and letting go in order to prevent the continuation of hurt and pain that we hand out to others in an unconscious way. Being freed from the past through letting go is a profound way of living up to our full potential.

Engagements at the workshops focused on awareness creation among participants rather than presenting ready-made professional standards from other countries. Participants were expected to self-evaluate the contextual conditions within their countries, and thereafter diagnose which professional level would be appropriate to their context. They needed to move from a notion of ignorance (where they don't know what they don't know), to amnesia (where they don't know what they know), to caution (where they know what they don't know), and ultimately, to certainty (where they know what they know). Although it is challenging to ensure that participants walk this journey, it is also rewarding to see and hear how participants start to take ownership of their decision-making rather than blaming others and their circumstances for the conditions they find themselves in. This gradual shift and the internal development that takes place is a blessing to all when it happens.

In particular, we should raise the issue of 'invisibility' of people within education planning – those individuals (learners, teachers and school communities) who are often not taken into account when we discuss and/or design solutions to address problems within education. Some people tend to be outside our frame of mind, and they fall within the 'I don't know what I don't know' zone. They are often marginalised and among society's disadvantaged. The viewing of a series of videos produced by CNN called 'Half the Sky', was used to demonstrate how children from desperate communities could easily be excluded from the debate within education since solutions to their particular problems could be seen as 'too

difficult'. In the absence of education systems finding solutions to their problems, they continue to suffer the burden of their circumstances, particularly when decision-makers start taking their challenges 'as a given'.

Through the above-mentioned methodological process of awareness, the following values with corresponding actions were embedded as part of the professional standards construction process, in order to develop and utilise the full potential of all willing participants:

- Self-responsibility: Participants were expected to take responsibility for the success of the engagement process as well as their own learning and personal benefits beyond the engagements.
- Authentic communication: Participants were encouraged to be open, honest, transparent and vulnerable (the possibility of making a mistake when sharing personal opinions and ideas) when engaging in communication. The facilitators gave protection to those who were prepared to be honest about their situation. Towards the end of the engagements, a particular group was applauded by the entire team 'for being honest'.
- Trust: Participants were encouraged to try new ideas and conversations and to take risks without fear of reprimand or put-down by colleagues if they made mistakes.
- Personal and group process skills: Participants established and endorsed protocols and skills that were deployed to resolve interpersonal difficulties and differences of opinion during the discussions. Most of the issues were resolved quickly and cleanly.
- Learning and growing: Participants were encouraged to work on real growth issues necessary for professional and personal development within the framework of the task at hand. Participants encouraged each other to challenge themselves and they supported each other to grow and develop.
- Caring: On numerous occasions, the facilitators and organisers of the discussions demonstrated in tangible ways concern for

individual and group well-being. This ensured that participants felt valued and were inspired to give their very best effort during the discussion sessions.

Another conceptual framework used was the acknowledgement of the 'deficit thinking' model that prevails in education systems across the world and, more prominently, in countries which were colonised and where people were oppressed. This oppression informed beliefs and thinking processes, which in turn influenced decisions and actions, and based on the colonial influence on our low psyche, self-esteem and self-worth, our modern 'neo-liberalism' is perpetuating the notion of neutrality, sitting on the fence, being implicit and uncritical and, very strongly, the notion of meritocracy – not everyone deserves to be successful. In education, 'neo-liberalism' regards the culture from which students come as 'less adequate' without exploring students' own perspectives. Schools not collecting information that will inform them of learners' culture will entrench deficit thinking. It is therefore easy to place students immediately within the 'at risk' category, and label them 'failure risks'. This phenomenon is cemented through appearance, language, values, home communities, family structures, and economic and employment status. The alternative to deficit thinking is developing a 'mentality of hope and possibility' among participants, as well as shifting the debate to people's strengths rather than their weaknesses.

### **3.3 Essential enabling conditions and factors for successful implementation**

Since the countries represented in the discussions were mostly from developing contexts, we had recurring conversations that pointed out their contextual and developmental conditions. The specific methodological and paradigmatic approaches were therefore important to ensure that professional standards are owned and controlled by the participants and those in the profession – both those who

practise and those who supervise education. Although professional standards must capture the combination of subject knowledge, student knowledge and contextual knowledge, all countries must ensure that those who are accepted within the profession satisfy the minimum subject knowledge (academic qualification) requirements in order to enhance the status of the profession and that the specificity of subject knowledge should not be compromised, but rather seen as the foundation of quality education.

Tertiary institutions must respond to the expectations of professional standards by establishing professional development programmes that assist in-service educators to respond to the standards. Professional standards must also be developed in a way that is adaptable and that can be adjusted when required, but not necessarily over short-term periods. The importance of developing appropriate strategies to communicate and collaborate with all groups to ensure buy-in and ownership of the professional standards was also identified.

It is important that the different stakeholders in education concentrate on their specific stage, focus and engagement in the policy formulation and implementation process. As indicated in Hodgkinson's policy-making process model (1983), the collation of appropriate ideas regarding professional standards during the philosophical and planning process is best served by academic and professional experts within the field of education. Once the appropriate ideas have been used to construct the professional standards, it is important to allow the relevant people or stakeholders to evaluate the politics of such professional standards in order to get their buy-in for positive mobilisation of their constituencies. The last process involves the managing and monitoring of the implementation process of the professional standards, and during this stage you would like technical feedback for teachers and school leaders regarding the challenges within the contextual settings. Involving those with the ideas and politics to lead the implementation process would not be helpful, since they would not know the technical

challenges. This does not exclude some people who could straddle the various levels, as long as they know which role to play during the policy-making process (see Gallie 2006: 11 for the reworked model).

Apart from the policy environment in the education system it is important that, at institutional level, school leaders ensure that systems are in place to enhance student learning, such as: (i) processes and procedures, (ii) resources and services, (iii) culture and climate, and (iv) communication. The above four systems will ensure that accountability lines are clear, and that an environment of trust can be developed. These systems are assuming that the personnel in the schools are competent to fulfil the tasks allocated to them, and that support is available where individuals and/or groups need assistance.

### **3.4 Key relationship issues related to development and management of professional standards**

There were four themes that emerged from the discussions in relation to the development and management of professional standards. These themes are:

- The relationship between professional standards and how those in the profession must professionally develop, manage and implement these standards. For individual teachers, it must enhance their ability to reflect on their practice, to identify their professional growth and the recognition that they are valued members of a collaborative professional community, and how professional standards can contribute to the development of the teaching profession as a whole by improving the professional knowledge and skills of individual and groups of teachers.
- The relationship between professional standards and student achievement, with specific reference to the accountability regime taking dominance within most countries. It is a given that there is a strong connection between the quality of teaching and the quality of student learning and, therefore, it would seem logical for

student achievement to be a measure of the quality of teaching. The real challenge is the nature of the assessment of student achievement that is used to judge the quality of teaching. Therefore, the need for strong professionalism among teachers will ensure that rich assessment processes are developed to measure student learning in relation to the quality of teaching. The connection between quality teaching and student achievement was strongly supported, but there is a need for careful research that will investigate the effects of good teaching on student achievement.

- The relationship between professional standards and the teaching context, since the complexity of teaching is located within a specific context. It is therefore not possible to abstract the act of teaching from the context. There has to be a commitment to carefully search for ways to address context in the standards descriptions of high-quality teaching practice. Developmental work has to be undertaken to ensure that the results of professional standards and the subsequent assessment include teachers from a range of education and teaching contexts in the countries.
- The relationship between professional standards and awarding credentials to teachers as a mechanism for creating career pathways for teachers who prove to be performing at a higher level than their colleagues. The rewards must be financially worthwhile in order to encourage teachers to achieve these standards. Furthermore, the assessment for awarding credentials will have to be fair to teachers in all types of teaching situations. The assessment should be legally defensible, economically affordable, administratively feasible and a worthwhile career advancement.

It was agreed that if these four themes are not carefully taken forward by individual countries, professional standards at best could become another policy with great potential, but not implementable, or at worst could create further

perceptions among teachers that they are not taken seriously as professionals.

It is therefore important to do a risk analysis of the possibility of this change project, i.e. the implementation of professional standards in your country. During the workshops, a case-study approach was used to elicit some practical examples and approaches as to how participants can deal with the challenges of implementation. Based on research, we know about six risks that are repeatedly plaguing change projects in education systems, which are easy to assess and manage. These are: the use of an inappropriate methodology, the lack of participant involvement, the lack of project management practice, the dissimilarity to previous practice, project complexity, and leadership commitment.

Risk assessment can be used to perform intuitive 'what if' analyses to guide participants in determining how they can proactively reduce professional standards implementation risk. This facilitates discussion intended to guide the team through an examination of: (i) strategic issues, (ii) organisational issues, (iii) size and scope of the change project, (iv) organisational dynamics, (v) actors in the change project, (vi) planning issues, (vii) technical issues, (viii) pre-implementation issues, (ix) implementation issues, and (x) operational and support issues. As facilitators of professional standards, we need to clearly differentiate between the risks that fall within and outside our sphere of influence. Four of the six risk drivers fall within the facilitators' sphere of influence, which are methodology fit, use of formal project management process, similarity to previous projects, and people involvement. On the other hand, the leadership commitment and project complexity will depend on the nature and contextual conditions of each organisation. The methodology and paradigm use, as well as the development of ownership among participants through active participation during a change project, are therefore two of the most challenging items to manage in relation to risks. If the correct methodology and paradigm of engagement and empowerment are not harnessed, then the risk of not implementing the change process is heightened.

The feedback from most countries which participated in the discussion showed that the purpose of thinking about, intending to use and currently using professional standards is not clear, except to say that most political leaders in education believe that this is the way to get quality education into their system. The thinking itself is not erroneous, but the process is flawed. In particular, one country among the participants that has developed professional standards could identify the design challenges within their professional standards, although they could understand and justify the reasons behind the current design process.

It is therefore advisable not to use professional standards as a tool to: solve weaknesses in the initial teacher training by the higher education institutions and teacher training colleges, tighten teacher entry level requirements through the use of licensing, improve school effectiveness, overcome union challenges, solve the accountability requirements, and solve incentive and reward arguments.

These challenges can be addressed through specific and more appropriate education strategies rather than using an instrument designed to improve the professionalism and quality of education in schools.

## 4. Concluding comments

The development of the Commonwealth standards framework has directly involved more than 30 countries through the regional consultations in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific regions, as well as the combined consultation that took place in South Africa. This process represents a significant investment from the Commonwealth and demonstrates the serious response to the original request from Commonwealth Ministers of Education at the 16th Conference of Commonwealth Education

Ministers (CCEM), and which has been confirmed at the more recent CCEMs.

The standards framework is now at a point where it can be taken back to ministers for their approval and subsequent implementation within the Commonwealth. Such a process should include validation of the standards through pilots in the identified countries. Care should be taken to keep the developmental purpose of the standards in mind, while also being realistic about the limits of what can be achieved

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# Resource materials

- National Professional Standards for Teachers, Australia, pp.124–145, Resource Pack 2
- Academic Standards for Caribbean Teacher Education Programmes, pp.2–9, Resource Pack 1
- Education International Declaration on Professional Ethics, pp.10–11, Resource Pack 1
- Georgia Candidate Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions, pp.12–16, Resource Pack 1
- Professional Standards for Teachers in Adult Education: Maryland's Framework, pp.17–28, Resource Pack 1
- Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, pp.122–123, Resource Pack 2
- Professional Standards for Teaching Mathematics, Michigan State University, pp.118–121, Resource Pack 2
- National Professional Standards for Teachers in Namibia, pp.29–180, Resource Pack 1
- New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders, pp.181–216, Resource Pack 1
- Professional Teaching Standards, New South Wales, pp.87–117, Resource Pack 2
- Professional standards for Nigerian Teachers, pp.217–300, Resource Pack 1
- North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, pp.86–99, Resource Pack 2
- Ohio Standards for Professional Development, pp.301–317, Resource Pack 1
- The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession, Ontario College of Teachers, pp.318–326, Resource Pack 1
- Development of a Set of Proposed Regional Standards for Teachers and Principals, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, pp.85–95, Resource Pack 2
- National Professional Standards for Teachers in Pakistan, pp.146–170, Resource Pack 2
- Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers, pp.1–2, Resource Pack 1
- Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards, pp.75–84, Resource Pack 2
- Legal Affairs and Ethics, South African Council for Educators, pp.327–338, Resource Pack 1
- The Design of the Continuing Professional Teacher Development System, South Africa, pp.339–380, Resource Pack 1
- Professional Standards for Teachers, Training and Development Agency for Schools, United Kingdom, pp.381–416, Resource Pack 1
- West Virginia Professional Teaching Standards, pp.1–74, Resource Pack 2

# Annex 1. Commonwealth Framework for Professional Standards

## Introductory note

This set of five professional standards has been developed by representatives of Commonwealth member countries with support from the Commonwealth Secretariat. The standards draw on country experiences and have been developed to:

- lay the foundation for developing or renovating pre-service, in-service and continuing professional development (CPD);
- assist teachers in self-assessment of their competencies, based upon which they can develop their learning and training plans to consolidate their professional qualifications;
- lay the foundation for monitoring and evaluating teachers' professional growth and learning;
- support the planning, deployment and utilisation of teachers and school leaders; and
- act as the basis to propose policies towards a competent teaching force.

The five categories of professional standards are as follows:

**PK** **Professional knowledge** – knowledge of the curriculum, the subject matter, the learner, the teaching practice, the education-related legislation, methods of communication and how to teach in a changing world.

**PSP** **Professional skills and practice** – necessary skills and standards that enable teachers to become professional and competent and communicate effectively with others.

**PEVA** **Professional ethics, values and attributes** – demonstrate positive values, attitudes and behaviour and be responsible for and

be aware of their professional duties and the statutory framework within which they function.

**PLCR** **Professional leadership, community and relationships** – work collaboratively with colleagues, communities and stakeholders to create a conducive learning environment and to provide effective communication.

**PL** **Professional learning** – participation in a wide range of CPD activities, pursuing opportunities to grow professionally and to enhance the teaching and learning process, the recognition of the interdependence of teacher learning and students' learning, and engagement in a continuum of professional growth to improve their practice.

Each of the categories is further described in terms of specific standards and their associated level descriptors across the following levels:

- **Initial** – for newly qualified teachers with limited experience, as well as more experienced teachers with limited professional development.
- **Proficient** – for qualified teachers who are able to demonstrate professional skills and attributes.
- **Distinguished** – for qualified teachers who are able to demonstrate advanced levels of professional ethics and values, leadership as well as own professional learning.

Table A.1 provides an indicative overview of the professional standards that carry the most emphasis across the different levels of proficiency.

Teachers, school leaders, curriculum developers and policy-makers are encouraged to contact the

Commonwealth Secretariat for more information and/or to become part of the growing community of practice involved in this initiative:

Commonwealth Secretariat,  
Marlborough House, Pall Mall,  
London SW1Y 5HX, UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 7747 6500 (switchboard)

Fax: +44 (0)20 7930 0827

Email: info@commonwealth.int

**Table A.1 Professional standards and levels of proficiency**

|             | Category of professional standard                    | Initial | Proficient | Distinguished |
|-------------|--|---------|------------|---------------|
| Pre-service | Professional knowledge                               | ***     | **         | *             |
| In-service  | Professional skills and practices                    | **      | ***        | **            |
|             | Professional ethics, values and attributes           | **      | **         | ***           |
|             | Professional leadership, community and relationships | *       | **         | ***           |
|             | Professional learning                                | *       | **         | ***           |

*Note: \*\*\* most relevant, \*\* relevant, \*less relevant*

## Professional knowledge

Commonwealth teachers should know the curriculum, the subject matter, the learner, the teaching practice, the education-related

legislation, methods of communication and how to teach in a changing world.

The following professional standards should be met by Commonwealth teachers.

|     | Standards  | Level descriptors  |   |  |
|-----|--|--|---|--|
|     |  | Initial  | Proficient  | Distinguished  |
| PK1 | <b>Knowledge and understanding of the curriculum</b> | Is able to apply and use knowledge of curriculum content and pedagogy to plan meaningful, engaging learning experiences appropriate to student level; has an adequate knowledge of the prerequisite curriculum preceding and following the current level; is able to demonstrate the inter-relatedness of disciplines that is demonstrated in lessons at a basic level | Is able to apply and use knowledge of curriculum content and pedagogy to plan meaningful, engaging learning experiences appropriate to student level; knows the curriculum required for student mastery of content of the levels preceding and following the current level; consistently demonstrates the inter-relatedness of disciplines in lessons | Is able to apply and use knowledge of curriculum content and pedagogy to plan meaningful, engaging learning experiences appropriate to student level; knows the curriculum required for student mastery of content of the levels preceding and following the current level; has a deep knowledge of the content and its interrelatedness within and across the disciplines |
| PK2 | <b>Knowledge of subject matter</b>                   | Demonstrates an adequate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter that creates and supports basic opportunities for students to learn   | Demonstrates a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject matter that creates and supports opportunities for students to learn   | Demonstrates a deep knowledge and understanding of the subject matter that creates and supports the best possible opportunities for students to learn  |
| PK3 | <b>Knowledge of the learner</b>                      | Demonstrates adequate knowledge of the underlying principles of how students develop and learn; demonstrates adequate recognition and acceptance of social and economic diversity of learners  | Demonstrates secure knowledge and understanding of the underlying principles of how students develop and learn; demonstrates understanding of social and economic diversity of learners   | Demonstrates deep knowledge and understanding of the underlying principles of how students develop and learn; demonstrates understanding of social and economic diversity of learners and influences colleagues and learners to do the same  |

| Standards |   | Level descriptors  |   |  |
|-----------|---|--|---|--|
|           |   | Initial  | Proficient  | Distinguished  |
| PK4       | <b>Knowledge of the teaching and learning environment</b> | Uses practical and theoretical knowledge of pedagogy to design and adapt a range of teaching, learning, and classroom management strategies relevant to student stages of learning; demonstrates basic knowledge and understanding of students' background, their skills, interests and prior achievements | Uses practical and theoretical knowledge of pedagogy to design and adapt a range of teaching, learning, and classroom management strategies relevant to student stages of learning; demonstrates knowledge and understanding of students' background, their skills, interests and prior achievements in a flexible and responsive manner to meet the students' learning needs; is able to facilitate teaching and learning for multi-grade classrooms     | Is sufficiently informed and has the relevant experience to give advice on the development and diverse needs of students   |
| PK5       | <b>Knowledge of the teaching practice</b>                 | Has broad understanding of mainstream theories informing teaching practice; some application of theories in practice   | Teaching practice is informed by theories; possesses the ability to understand, critique and apply theories that inform classroom practice  | Uses theories and current research to inform practices; thinks systematically about practices; possesses the ability to learn from experience; is involved as a member of learning communities; seeks professional development opportunities to enhance skills and practices |
| PK6       | <b>Knowledge of planning skills</b>                       | Demonstrates adequate planning skills to cater for the different learning abilities; able to link objectives of lessons to learning outcomes; uses appropriate and varied teaching strategies  | Demonstrates good planning skills to cater for the different learning needs and abilities; able to link objectives of lessons to learning outcomes; uses appropriate and varied teaching strategies; unpacks objectives to attain SMART (Specific, Measurable, Appropriate (and) action-oriented, Results-oriented, Time-specific) learning outcomes; develops a disaster management strategy that caters for both physical and human needs of the school | Demonstrates creativity in relating lesson objectives to broader educational goals; develops long- and medium-term plans; planning takes cognisance of major events and includes these as teaching and learning opportunities  |

| Standards |   | Level descriptors   |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|
|           |   | Initial   | Proficient  | Distinguished   |
| PK7       | <b>Knowledge of the education-related policies and legislation including the rights of children</b> | Demonstrates awareness of the country's legislative and policy framework for education that teachers need to comply with following employment in a school; respects the rights of children  | Demonstrates knowledge and application of the country's legislative and policy framework for education that teachers need to comply with following employment in a school; works collaboratively with others including colleagues, parents, guardians and community members to contribute to implementation of workplace policies and practices including health and safety; respects and advances the rights of children | Demonstrates deep knowledge and application of the country's legislative and policy framework for education that teachers need to comply with following employment in a school; makes contributions to education policy and practice at the school and in wider professional contexts; actively participates in policy and legislative processes, including to advance the rights of children                       |
| PK8       | <b>Knowledge of methods of communication</b>  | Demonstrates adequate use of knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal and written communication techniques  | Demonstrates good use of knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal and written communication techniques  | Demonstrates use of knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal and written communication techniques to foster the use of enquiry, collaboration and supportive interactions   |
| PK9       | <b>Knowledge of assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the learner</b>                            | Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of effective practices to assess student achievement of learning outcomes; relies primarily on summative assessment for evaluation; may refer to prior instruction, but doesn't routinely make connections to new learning; provides adequate feedback to learners | Demonstrates comprehensive knowledge and understanding of a range of effective practices to assess student achievement of learning outcomes; uses balanced assessment (i.e. formative and summative) to guide instruction; activates prior knowledge and teaches students strategies to engage with the content; provides clear and constructive feedback to learners   | Demonstrates, models and practises self-assessment; promotes and encourages student self-assessment; transfers ownership of learning to students and teaches students to engage with content; uses up-to-date information relating to national testing and examinations to assist learners to improve their achievements; provides clear and constructive feedback to learners that encourages reflective practices |

| Standards | Level descriptors   |   |   |  |
|-----------|---|---|---|--|
|           | Initial   | Proficient  | Distinguished   |  |
| PK10      | <b>Knowledge of quality assessment, monitoring and feedback procedures</b>                                    | Gathers data on student performance using some assessment strategies; keeps a record of group and individual achievement; reports and provides ongoing feedback of individual achievement to students and parents | Able to manage and monitor students' learning through continuous formative assessment and modification of teaching strategies to suit the needs and learning abilities of students; able to use assessment as a tool to guide and improve students' learning; provides parents and students with feedback on students' learning; develops and puts in place an assessment and monitoring system to guide how students' performance will be assessed and monitored; constantly monitors and evaluates progress | Gathers data on student performance using a variety of assessment strategies; keeps a continuous and comprehensive record of group and individual achievement; reports and provides ongoing feedback of individual achievement to students and parents; reflects on trends in student assessment data to inform teaching practices |
| PK11      | <b>Knowledge of information and communication technology (ICT) including a wide range of new technologies</b> | Demonstrates an understanding of technological concepts and effectively utilises technologies to support teaching   | Demonstrates an understanding of technological concepts and effectively utilises a range of technologies to support teaching; knowledge of selecting appropriate e-curriculum materials and integrating them into lesson planning and implementation  | Demonstrates an understanding of technological concepts and effectively utilises a range of technologies to support their teaching; keeps abreast of changes in technology as it relates to instructional and administrative functions   |

## Professional skills and practices

Commonwealth teachers should develop and uphold necessary skills and standards that would enable them to become professional and competent teachers who can also communicate effectively with others.

The following professional standards should be met by Commonwealth teachers.

|      | Standards  | Level descriptors  |  |   |
|------|--|--|--|---|
|      |  | Initial  | Proficient   | Distinguished   |
| PSP1 | <b>Knowledge of the context in which teaching strategies are developed</b> | Designs and implements contextually relevant teaching and learning strategies  | Applies effective teaching strategies in delivery of lessons; demonstrates creativity in teaching; uses appropriate teaching resources to meet students' learning needs; acknowledges students' prior knowledge of concepts learned, especially in their own contexts; designs and teaches motivating lessons that would raise students' attainment level, as well as inspiring curiosity and satisfaction in learning; able to demonstrate a caring, loving and positive attitude in teaching and learning practice | Designs and implements contextually relevant teaching and learning; anticipates and plans the kinds of learning needed to respond to a variety of educational contexts; promotes and leads the development of contextually relevant, inclusive teaching strategies  |
| PSP2 | <b>Knowledge of quality assessment, monitoring and feedback procedures</b> | Gathers data on student performance using assessment strategies; keeps a record of group and individual achievement; reports and provides ongoing feedback of individual achievement to students and parents | Manages and monitors students' learning through continuous formative assessment and modification of teaching strategies to suit the needs and learning abilities of students; uses assessment as a tool to guide and improve students' learning; provides parents and students with feedback on students' learning; develops, monitors and evaluates policy for assessment   | Gathers data on student performance using a variety of assessment strategies; keeps a comprehensive record of group and individual achievement; reports and provides ongoing feedback of individual achievement to students and parents; uses trends in student achievement data to inform teaching practices |

| Standards |  | Level descriptors   |  |  |
|-----------|--|---|--|--|
|           |  | Initial   | Proficient   | Distinguished  |
| PSP3      | <b>Effectively review and reflect on teaching and learning practices</b> | Reviews and reflects on their practices; reflects on use of up-to-date subject knowledge and pedagogy; makes some adjustments to enhance student learning   | Reflects on and reviews teaching practice constantly and its impact on students' learning and achievement levels; reflects on the feedback given to students regarding their performance and provides guidance to them on how they can improve in their learning and performance | Reviews and reflects on their practices and takes responsibility for identifying and meeting developing professional needs; reflects on use of up-to-date subject knowledge and pedagogy; makes necessary adjustments to enhance student learning  |
| PSP4      | <b>A safe and supportive learning environment</b>                        | Creates and maintains a safe and supportive learning environment where students are treated with courtesy, respect, integrity, justice, empathy and dignity   | Establishes a meaningful, safe and supportive learning environment for students according to their needs and abilities and in their own contexts; provides an environment that safeguards students from any forms of abuse   | Creates and maintains a safe and supportive learning environment that is conducive to teaching and learning, and promotes responsibility among learners for themselves, others and the environment; negotiates with students their learning environment; guides colleagues to create safe and supportive learning environments |
| PSP5      | <b>Team spirit and collaboration</b>                                     | Demonstrates commitment to collaboration, co-operation and collegiality; works as a team member and identifies opportunities for working with colleagues, and sharing the development of effective practice with them | Actively engages in learning with colleagues in a way that models collaboration and collegiality to improve practice   | Contributes to the professional development of colleagues through coaching and mentoring, demonstrating effective practice, and providing advice and feedback  |

| Standards |                                   | Level descriptors  |  |  |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
|           |                                   | Initial  | Proficient   | Distinguished  |
| PSP6      | <b>Communicate professionally</b> | Communicates in the language of education using precise language and appropriate oral and written expressions; communicates effectively with students, parents and the community; demonstrates ICT literacy for the betterment of students' learning | Communicates learning content in the language of education using precise language and appropriate oral and written expressions in ways that lead to the integration of learning, and reveal the relevance and educational value of the subject; establishes proper two-way communication processes in the school and with stakeholders; communicates effectively with students, parents and the community; ICT literate for the betterment of students' learning | Makes and strengthens connections between home and school through effective communication with families and other members of the community; communicates in a variety of ways that demonstrate a sensitivity to cultural, linguistic, gender and social differences; fosters effective communication among teachers and the administration |

## Professional ethics, values and attributes

Commonwealth teachers have the responsibility to have sound knowledge of, and to uphold and model, the standards of professional ethics, values and attributes associated with teaching. Commonwealth teachers should demonstrate positive values, attitudes and behaviour and be responsible for and aware of their professional duties and the statutory framework within which they function. Teachers are also responsible for

maintaining the dignity of learners, colleagues, administrators, parents and the larger community; they should show empathy for learners, respect for other people's norms, values and opinions, and know how to identify and support children and young people whose progress, development or well-being is affected by changes or difficulties in their personal circumstances.

The following professional standards should be met by Commonwealth teachers.

| Standard | Level descriptors                        |  |   |  |
|----------|--|--|---|--|
|          | Initial                                  | Proficient   | Distinguished   |  |
| PEVA1    | Respect for learners' rights and dignity | <p>Demonstrates respect for human rights, including the rights of the child, and dignity without prejudice to individual or cultural differences, including the right to privacy and confidentiality; respects the values, customs and norms of the community; understands and utilises alternative forms of discipline; maintains appropriate confidentiality on learner matters and data</p> | <p>Demonstrates respect for learners' rights and dignity without prejudice to individual or cultural differences, including the right to privacy and confidentiality; shuns all forms of abuse including those related to office; respects the values, customs and norms of the community; demonstrates appreciation of the basic worth of each individual and cultural group; maintains and advocates appropriate confidentiality on learner matters and data; promotes humane treatment of learners; knows and uses alternative forms of discipline</p> | <p>Models respect for learners' rights and dignity without prejudice to individual or cultural differences, including the right to privacy and confidentiality; shuns all forms of abuse including those related to office; encourages colleagues to respect the values, customs and norms of the community; demonstrates and encourages appreciation of the basic worth of each individual and cultural group; understands alternative forms of discipline and is able to monitor and support these; maintains, advocates and ensures appropriate confidentiality on learner matters and data; promotes humane treatment of learners and works as vanguard against all forms of child labour and maltreatment within the education organisation or in society</p> |

| Standard |  | Level descriptors   |  |   |
|----------|--|---|--|---|
|          |  | Initial   | Proficient   | Distinguished   |
| PEVA2    | <b>Role model to learners</b>  | Demonstrates the kind of behaviour, character and virtues expected of learners; has high self-esteem; honest in dealing with students, colleagues and the community; law-abiding; tolerates differences in religion, ethnicity, etc.; is open minded; acts upon advice, and is open to coaching and mentoring | Demonstrates the behaviour, character and virtues expected of learners; accepts other responsibilities outside designated roles; values constructive criticism   | Demonstrates the behaviour, character and virtues expected of learners and colleagues; accepts other responsibilities outside designated roles; values constructive criticism   |
| PEVA3    | <b>Treat parents and guardians with utmost respect and courtesy</b>          | Works actively to involve parents in their child's academic activities and performance, and communicates clearly with them; demonstrates respect and courtesy towards parents and guardians   | Interacts with parents and guardians in a professional manner that is fair and equitable; reports effectively to parents and caregivers about student learning; demonstrates and promotes respect and courtesy towards parents and guardians | Communicates effectively with parents and guardians, conveying timely and relevant information about attainment, objectives, progress and well-being; demonstrates the importance of involving parents and caregivers in the educative process; demonstrates, promotes and ensures respect and courtesy towards parents and guardians; monitors and facilitates appropriate behaviour of other teachers |
| PEVA4    | <b>Respect contract(s) duly entered into with employer and other parties</b> | Keeps to the contractual agreements with the employer   | Keeps to the contractual agreements with the employer and supports others to do the same   | Effectively manages collective bargaining and other contractual agreements related to the school  |

## Professional leadership, community and relationships

Leaders are developed to work collaboratively with colleagues, communities and stakeholders to create conducive learning environments and to provide effective communication. They

participate with stakeholders to train teachers to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their teaching and learning.

The following professional standards should be met by Commonwealth teachers.

| Standards | Level descriptors   |   |   |  |
|-----------|---|---|---|--|
|           | Initial   | Proficient  | Distinguished   |  |
| PLCR1     | <b>Engage in promoting high-quality teaching and learning</b>   | Participates in continued, high-quality professional development; provides opportunities for the development of good relationships between students, colleagues, the school and wider community; ensures the relevance of the teaching with regard to the curriculum, including for learners with special needs | Participates in continued, high-quality professional development; advises and assists colleagues to design and implement high-quality teaching and learning programmes; provides opportunities for the development of good relationships between students, colleagues, the school and wider community | Has a record of outstanding teaching and commitment to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning; articulates a vision of education to their students, peers, the profession and the wider community; takes a leadership role in enhancing teacher knowledge and understanding about the school and wider community; fulfils an active role in developing a conducive school culture and ethos; upholds and encourages fellow teachers to meet the requirements of professional standards |
| PLCR2     | <b>Committed to a vision for their students, colleagues and communities and playing an active role in promoting a distinctive school culture and/or ethos</b> | Demonstrates commitment to the vision of the school for students, colleagues and communities  | Assists in the development of a clear vision of a desired future state for the school and makes input into how the initiatives will contribute to achieving the school's vision   | Works in collaboration with colleagues by participating, mentoring and guiding colleagues as they implement the initiatives and communicate the school's vision with parents and the community to share how school-wide initiatives will actively support an improved learning environment for students  |

| Standards |  | Level descriptors   |   |   |
|-----------|--|---|---|---|
|           |  | Initial   | Proficient  | Distinguished   |
| PLCR3     | Preserve and promote local and national culture                        | Demonstrates commitment to preserving and promoting the country's local and national history, environment and people, particularly indigenous peoples and cultures        | Demonstrates commitment to preserving and promoting the country's local and national history, environment and people, particularly indigenous peoples and cultures; understands how to use this knowledge in the context of their teaching; ensures that the school schedules cultural days and cultural activities are integrated into the programme | Demonstrates commitment to preserving and promoting the country's local and national history, environment and people, particularly indigenous peoples and cultures; understands how to use this and how to support others to use this knowledge in the context of their teaching  |
| PLCR4     | Partnerships between the community and stakeholders                    | Works in partnership with colleagues, families, other professionals, institutions, NGOs and the wider community   | Promotes trust and understanding and builds partnerships with all segments of the school community; conducts regular (quarterly where possible) meetings with school communities  | Establishes respectful and productive relationships and develops co-operative partnerships with diverse families, educators and others in the community in support of student learning and well-being; monitors success of partnerships and takes corrective actions where needed |
| PLCR5     | Nurturing, mentoring and coaching                                      | Acts upon advice and feedback and is open to coaching and mentoring; contributes to developing and/or enhancing the professional expertise and practice of other teachers | Coaches and mentors teachers; contributes to developing the professional expertise and practice of other teachers   | Develops and supports mentoring programmes for new, returning and pre-service teachers and those needing professional support; develops the professional expertise and practice of other teachers   |
| PLCR6     | Outstanding interpersonal skills to empower colleagues and communities | Possesses the analytical, interpersonal and organisational skills necessary to empower colleagues and communities   | Has the commitment, enthusiasm and interpersonal skills to assume a professional role within schools and their broader communities  | Has the commitment, enthusiasm and interpersonal skills to assume a professional role within schools and their broader communities and to contribute to the operations of a school as a whole; responsibilities are delegated   |

| Standards |  | Level descriptors  |  |   |
|-----------|--|--|--|---|
|           |  | Initial  | Proficient   | Distinguished   |
| PLCR7     | <b>Apply critical analysis and problem-solving skills to educational matters</b>           | Selects and uses teaching strategies, including problem solving, critical analysis and creative thinking | Selects and uses teaching strategies, including problem solving, critical analysis, creative thinking and resources to engage students and support their achievement of learning goals | Supports teachers to select and use teaching strategies, including problem solving, critical analysis, creative thinking and resources to engage students and support their achievement of learning goals; facilitates problem-solving meetings with colleagues and communities |
| PLCR8     | <b>Create conducive learning environment through the incorporation of new technologies</b> | Utilises new technologies in lessons; works with colleagues to implement new technologies                | Identifies and utilises new technologies in lessons; works with colleagues, communities and stakeholders to implement new technologies   | Identifies and utilises new technologies in own lessons and assists others to do the same; initiates the use of new technologies with colleagues, through the engagement of communities and stakeholders  |

## Professional learning

Commonwealth teachers should actively participate in a wide range of CPD activities, pursuing opportunities to grow professionally and to enhance the teaching and learning process. Commonwealth teachers should recognise

the interdependence of teacher learning and student learning; they engage in a continuum of professional growth to improve their practice.

The following professional standards should be met by Commonwealth teachers.

| Standards |  | Level descriptors   |  |   |
|-----------|--|---|--|---|
|           |  | Initial   | Proficient   | Distinguished   |
| PL1       | <b>Assess and identify own professional needs for self-development</b> | Carries out self-evaluation and establishes professional goals under supervision; consults resources to inform practice and be committed to improving practice through appropriate professional development, including relevant CPD courses | Persistently and critically examines their practice through a continuous cycle of self-improvement focused on how they learn, teach and work in a global and digital society; conducts action research; reflects on and improves their practice, and takes responsibility for identifying and meeting own developing professional needs, and sharing their experiences with colleagues | Demonstrates a high degree of responsibility for own professional development and the identification of own professional needs; awareness that professional development activities should lead to the improvement of learner achievements, especially in poorer and disadvantaged communities; provides mentorship to other teachers in their self-reflection and identification of their further professional development; leads professional development activities among the teachers; engages in school-based research to inform teaching/learning and professional development |
| PL2       | <b>Participate in professional development opportunities</b>           | Participates in relevant professional development in-service, workshops, courses, and conferences that relate to appropriate instructional approaches, content, and learning theory   | Participates as active member of professional community, engaging in a wide range of reflective practices  | Participates as active, responsible member of professional community, engaging in a wide range of reflective practices; pursues opportunities to grow professionally and establishes collegial relationships to enhance own teaching and learning process and that of their colleagues, and encourages and supports professional development among teachers   |

| Standards |   | Level descriptors   |  |   |
|-----------|---|---|--|---|
|           |   | Initial   | Proficient   | Distinguished   |
| PL3       | <b>Engage in a continuum of professional growth to improve practice</b>       | Recognises that continuous professional growth is an integral part of teaching; demonstrates a commitment to continued professional growth by participating in professional learning activities | Recognises that continuous professional growth is an integral part of teaching; recognises that teaching and professional growth are influenced by personal, social and educational contexts; demonstrates a commitment to continued professional growth and shares successful areas of practice with colleagues | Recognises that continuous professional growth is an integral part of teaching; recognises that teaching and professional growth are influenced by personal, social and educational contexts; demonstrates a commitment to continued professional growth; creates opportunities for teachers to engage in professional growth; engages in dialogue on issues related to teaching and learning; shares successful areas of practices with colleagues |
| PL4       | <b>Incorporate new skills in the teaching and learning process</b>            | Incorporates new skills and knowledge gained through professional development into the learning environment to enhance the quality of instruction   | Takes own initiative to incorporate new skills and knowledge gained through professional development into the learning environment to enhance the quality of instruction   | Takes own initiative and encourages others to incorporate new skills and knowledge gained through professional development into the learning environment to enhance the quality of instruction; identifies and initiates opportunities for new skills and knowledge to be gained through professional development to enhance personal and school growth for self and other teachers   |
| PL5       | <b>Reflect on the subject taught and how to teach the subject to students</b> | Reflects on subjects/curriculum areas and related pedagogy to enable them to teach effectively across the age and ability range for which they are trained                                      | Develops secure knowledge and understanding of subjects/curriculum areas and related pedagogy through reflection and engagement with up-to-date discourse to enable them to teach effectively across the age and ability range for which they are trained  | Becomes more aware of current trends in order to support teachers to engage in reflective practice to enable them to teach effectively across the age and ability range for which they are trained  |

| Standards |   | Level descriptors  |  |  |
|-----------|---|--|--|--|
|           |   | Initial  | Proficient   | Distinguished  |
| PL6       | <b>Recognise the interdependence of teacher learning and student learning</b> | Acknowledges the interdependence of teacher and learner learning | Acknowledges and demonstrates the interdependence of teacher and learner learning; demonstrates ability to reflect critically on teaching and learning practice to enhance teacher learning and student learning | Applies the principles of the interdependence of teacher and learner learning to own practices and encourages others to do so; understands the influences that affect individual student learning and differentiates their instruction accordingly; explains and understands the link between the quality of teachers' practice and student learning |

## Annex 2. Commonwealth Framework for Professional Standards: Methodological guidelines

### Introductory note

The purpose of these methodological guidelines is to share some of the methods and processes that guided the workshops as well as the construction of the Commonwealth Framework for Professional Standards. From the outset it is important to note that the process of constructing a framework for professional standards that would be relevant to both developed and developing countries had to be different from the 'one-size-fits-all' approach commonly used. Furthermore, professional standards had been initiated and constructed at country and regional levels long before this pan-Commonwealth process: ensuring that the document would be useful to countries that have been involved in the construction of professional standards for some time, and those countries starting the process, posed a conceptual challenge.

The information below represents the methods and thinking processes that guided the work with the primarily developing countries that participated in the construction of the professional standards framework. These countries were encouraged to represent their own scenarios within the debates and discussions, and they were challenged to be 'real' to their constituencies while accepting that there could be other ways and alternatives relevant and appropriate to them. For example, the following vignette was presented during one workshop. Imagine Country A, where the total population of learners is 50,000, with an existing teacher population of 1,000. The reality is therefore a pupil-to-teacher ratio of 1:50. If teachers of this country are informed by teachers of Country B that their country's pupil to teacher ratio is 1:25, and therefore also expects that Country A adheres to the ratio of Country B, then Country A is 'importing' an immediate shortage of teachers

of 1,000. This challenge was created by Country A through the adoption of an instrument, process or idea that does not respond to or take into account their own reality or circumstances. This does not mean that Country A should not strive to reduce their pupil-to-teacher ratio, but rather that the realities of countries should be uppermost in the minds of policy-makers, principals and teachers when they use this framework. This framework was constructed with the intention of improving and guiding countries in their journey to set up or improve their professional standards for teachers and school leaders.

The following are guidelines that can be used when developing, implementing and managing professional standards, from the point of view of teachers, heads of department, principals, policy developers and curriculum developers at teacher training institutions.

### Guidelines for teachers

As the front-line implementers of curriculum and facilitators of learning and education, teachers should be:

1. Empowered with the jargon of the profession, quality education, professional development, professional learning, curriculum content, subject matter, syllabus, content coverage, etc. to ensure the connection between what the framework wants to achieve and where teachers are in their understanding of professional standards.
2. Supported through actions performed during the implementation process, including the necessary support by key stakeholders at district level.
3. Exposed to well-structured and conceptualised education support

programmes (including literacy) that undertake to educate and develop the capacity of teachers on professional standards, and that could be effected through various media instruments and occasions such as TV, radio, posters, teacher development days, teacher development centres, district officials, etc.

4. Exposed to the notion of professional standards through policy statements, expected and proposed practice, as well as the benefit of implementation, especially the foundational intention of professional standards, which is to improve the quality of education for all learners – it is important that teachers are conversant with the related policies and practices of professional standards.
5. Encouraged to 'buy in' to the professional standards through an aggressive marketing campaign to raise awareness on:
  - a. the process of the development of national professional standards;
  - b. teacher involvement;
  - c. monitoring of implementation; and
  - d. the 'Why? and How?' of professional standards, with specific reference to the fact that it is meant to be developmental and not punitive.
6. Informed how existing and/or intended development appraisal systems will relate to professional standards. In particular, teachers must see the maintaining of professional standards and the related competencies as part of their own responsibilities, and not of others.
7. Encouraged to see this as a process intended to restore teachers as professionals, and therefore the related teacher professionalism discussions must take place in a comprehensive way, which includes views from social, economic, ethical and moral, legal and professional perspectives.
8. Given the opportunity to revise and review their current teacher job descriptions

to include the discourse on professional standards.

## **Guidelines for principals and head teachers**

As the instructional leader in the school, principals and head teachers should:

1. Engage in dialogue with their staff in order to:
  - a. stimulate staff buy-in of professional standards (to feel a sense ownership);
  - b. ensure common understanding of professional standards and implications related to implementation;
  - c. enable self-evaluation by teachers against the professional standards, thus improving quality of performance; and
  - d. create space for peer dialogue, developing professional communities and encouraging team work.
2. Enable excellence in staff performance by:
  - a. negotiating and agreeing on the indicators of good performance;
  - b. enabling more precise identification of staff needs;
  - c. facilitating objective staff appraisal;
  - d. identifying areas for improvements or training among teachers;
  - e. providing constructive critique and feedback to teachers;
  - f. improving planning and implementation of professional development and growth;
  - g. fostering accountability at all levels of staff, including lead teachers, HODs, grade co-ordinators, etc.; and
  - h. motivating staff to achieve higher levels of performance.
3. Oversee the improvement of learner outcomes through:
  - a. successful implementation of the professional standards;
  - b. improvement of the quality of teaching and learning; and

- c. allowing and opening avenues for innovative teaching and learning approaches, including the use of technology.
- 4. Incorporate professional standards within their school improvement plans by:
  - a. setting targets for teacher professional development and learner improvement; and
  - b. allocating the required resources to ensure improvement in teacher performance and hence learner outcomes.
- 5. Build and strengthen the understanding and relationship of key stakeholders by:
  - a. holding discussions with stakeholders on professional standards to improve their understanding of the expected outcomes and benefits to the entire school community; and
  - b. facilitating strategic partnerships and related contributions with communities and stakeholders.

### **Guidelines for heads of subject departments or faculties**

School leaders should:

1. Lead the promotion of professional standards based on their deep understanding of professional standards.
2. Ensure that every teacher within their department understands professional standards.
3. Provide guidance to their teachers as to how professional standards will affect their work (teaching and the facilitation of learning).
4. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of professional standards against the intended benefits.
5. Identify and initiate capacity building of teachers where gaps are identified during monitoring and evaluation.
6. Be responsible and available for peer learning, and collaboration on issues related to management, supervision and mentoring.

- 7. Organise school community hubs to explore best practice with regard to professional standards.
- 8. Engage parents on the benefits for their children of professional standards in the learning profession.
- 9. Engage in their own professional learning to improve their leadership and management skills on professional standards when identified as necessary.
- 10. Create communities of practice among teachers where feedback on learner achievements, progress and related remedial interventions can be shared.

### **Guidelines for policy developers (including ministry officials)**

Policy developers should ensure the promulgation and implementation of:

1. Professional standards that are sensitised, authenticated and verified by teachers and school leaders through their participation and involvement in the developmental stages of the professional standards policy.
2. Professional development policies for teachers and school leaders that will assist with the achievement and maintenance of professional standards among teachers and school leaders, wherever and whenever there is a gap.
3. Performance appraisal and management systems that will be linked to the professional standards of teachers and school leaders.
4. Management and performance of schools systems that will improve the quality of education and learner performance.
5. External supervision and monitoring systems that will be linked to the professional standards of teachers and school leaders.
6. Accountability policies and systems that will clarify the consequences of teachers and school leaders not achieving and/or maintaining their professional standards, after assistance and numerous interventions, as

expected in the employment laws and civil service regulations.

### **Guidelines for developers of curriculum**

Developers of curriculum should:

1. Ensure a deep understanding (with related implications) of, and a strong alignment of their training programmes to, the professional standards.
2. Establish a focus group among their communities of practice to ensure internal accountability to the facilitation of and adherence to professional standards.
3. Review existing teacher education programmes against the professional standards for a teacher entering the profession.
4. Incorporate curriculum development competences into initial teacher education programmes.
5. Ensure that lecturers are involved in researching their practices and are able to inculcate enquiring minds in the development of their students.
6. Ensure that the appropriate resources are available to assist lecturers in their training and students in their learning process in order to achieve the professional standards required of entry teachers.
7. Re-evaluate the requirements of field experience/practicum against the requirements of the professional standards.
8. Re-evaluate current selection/recruitment requirements against the expectations of the professional standards in relation to academic proficiency and dispositional expectations to teaching and the care of children.
9. Re-evaluate current curriculum to include processes that will enhance the beliefs and attitudinal values of the profession, such as service learning.
10. Restructure current curriculum to close the gap between teaching strategies in theory and in practice.
11. Incorporate within the current curriculum the need for reflection and self-evaluation of teaching practice.
12. During the teacher training process, display varied models of authentic assessment strategies which could serve as examples in practice.
13. Establish quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that teacher training programmes adhere to and deliver the outcomes implicit in the professional standards.