Professionalism

Education and training practitioners across further education and skills

August 2012
Foreword

IfL has engaged over 10,000 members in debates and discussions around professional identity and what professionalism means to teachers and trainers in our sector. Through seminars and surveys on professionalism, discussion forums on CPD and the impact of teacher training qualifications on status and practice. This paper on professionalism is a culmination of members’ views which have been brought together in response to recent wider sector debate on what professionalism in FE means. We thank our members for their contribution to this paper.

Introduction

Enabling effective learning whether for young people or adults in colleges, adult and community learning or in work-based settings requires high levels of expertise of teachers, trainers, assessors, work supervisors, community mentors and related roles. As McKinsey found and Ofsted agree ‘The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers’. The learning professionals in the further education and skills sector are the backbone of the system as they make the difference for individual learners to succeed. To reflect the diversity of those holding teaching and training related roles in the further education and skills sector, the generic term ‘education and training practitioner’ is used.

IfL promotes a model of teacher and trainer professionalism in further education and skills with three fundamental tenets:

1. The highest standards for teaching, training and learning, supported by the professional body over a career;
2. the learners’ and public interest is central;
3. professionals uphold ethical values.

1. The highest standards for teaching, training and learning, supported by the professional body over a career.

Professional education and training practitioners:

- are dual professionals, having deep knowledge, conceptual understanding and expertise in teaching and learning processes and contexts for diverse learners, matched with expert subject knowledge and skills
- have a personal commitment to reflect on and share expertise with professional colleagues, to innovate and learn from the best national and international practices, and through professional body membership
- enjoy professional recognition and status, and hold at least level 5 (degree equivalent level) qualifications in learning and teaching, or be committed to work towards this within the first years of practice
- have the ability and space to make judgements and decisions based on knowledge and experience and so practising with autonomy, trust and accountability
- expect a professionalised environment in which to operate, where leaders and managers are responsible for ensuring a collaborative culture which secures excellence, resting on trust and confidence
• deserve career pathways which offer suitable rewards to individual professionals as they demonstrate excellence.

2. The learners’ and public interest is central

**Professional education and training practitioners:**
• enjoy the confidence and trust of the public
• have the success of learners as paramount
• share a passion for lifelong learning, both for themselves for their learners and the wider public.

3. Professionals uphold ethical values

**Professional education and training practitioners:**
• commit to a collective base of ethical values which must be reflected in how the individual represents the profession at work and in public domains
• make a personal commitment to use their expertise and skills for the benefit of the public at all times and be determined that their work upholds the values of equality and diversity
• experience, expertise and views are shared generously to inform good national and local policy developments.
IfL promotes a model of teacher and trainer professionalism in further education that has as central:

1) The highest standards for teaching, training and learning, supported by the professional body over a career.

Dual professionalism: deep knowledge, conceptual understanding and expertise in teaching and learning processes and contexts, matched with expert subject knowledge and skills.

High-quality education and training means more than impressive Ofsted scores and metrics relating to learners and employers. Professional teachers and trainers have deep knowledge, conceptual understanding and expertise in teaching and learning processes which they can apply in a diverse range of contexts for a diverse population of learners. Professional practitioners have high standards and need the freedom and space to innovate with their delivery methods and their curriculum to meet the needs of this diversity. Such innovation might include for example, the effective utilisation of modern and emerging learning technologies or the development of specialist learning resources for learners' with learning difficulties and / or disabilities.

Being given the space to reflect on research findings on the most up-to-date and effective teaching methods, and improve and experiment with practice to identify what works best for particular contexts with learners is essential. Professional teachers and trainers prioritise time to reflect on and improve their practice where they are able but they must also have the space to keep up to date with the subject area which they teach, as well as technological developments and other developments in practice.

“It is one thing to be qualified as an Industry Professional - but that doesn't make someone a good teacher. In order to ensure equivalence in both disciplines, a separate, specific teaching qualification is critical. Teaching is far, far more, than merely sharing skills and showing people how to do something.” Adult and community learning teacher

“My husband is very talented at his job, he is very successful, however, he cannot explain how to do his job in a way which others can learn from. That is the difference between a teacher and a competent tradesperson. Teaching is not just knowing - it's the ability to pass on that information in a way which allows and encourages others to learn. It is the ability to break down information into understandable 'bites' which students can build upon to develop their own learning and skills.” FE college teacher

Choosing to teach or train your chosen academic or vocational subject specialism is testament to the passion individuals have for the subject but also their commitment in skilling and up-skilling this and future generations in the workforce. Practitioners must therefore be equipped to keep up to date with both teaching and training methods, and developments within their specialist field. They must be afforded opportunities to update and refresh their own vocational skills, have an acute awareness of developments and advances in technology and have an understanding and appreciation of related social and economic developments. This comes to the heart of our belief that vocational education has to be about more than practical skills, but it a holistic learning experience, grounded in the culture and practices of the trade or profession itself.
Figure one: Professional development for dual professionals

This pie chart, taken from IfL’s CPD Review 2010-11 aligns consistently with results over the last three years. Professional education and training practitioners in IfL membership carry out more than the current minimum of 30 hours of annual CPD, and that practitioners choose to carry out a near-equal proportion of time engaging in subject specialist CPD as with teaching and learning CPD.

A personal commitment to their own professionalism, to share expertise with professional colleagues, to innovate and learn from the best national and international practices through professional body membership.

Individual teachers and trainers have a responsibility for their own professionalism. They shape and influence their own development often in collaboration with peers and with the support of their employers and their professional body. Leaders and managers have the responsibility for the culture, ethos and systems that support a professional workforce to be at its best. The employer does not own the professionalism of individual practitioners, as this would damage and detract from the vital personal commitment of being an up-to-date and reflective professional. Professional body membership supports teachers and trainers to look curiously and widely to best practice nationally and internationally, as well as enabling reciprocity and sharing of good practice between members. Commitment to collaboration is integral to the professional identity and roles of all teaching and learning practitioners and to the work of the professional body in fostering this, as well as leaders and managers.

“It [continuing professional development (CPD)] keeps us all on the top of our game and encourages us to maintain our development as teachers and prevents stagnation by keeping up to date through CPD courses and having to declare what has been achieved each year.” **Adult and community learning teacher**

“There is always something new to learn. I, myself, have enjoyed the CPD I undertook this year and have found it really beneficial. I was able to select CPD that would fit in with my timetable and also that would be very relevant to my teaching. I delivered CPD to staff on dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit behaviours and learning. The feedback suggested that staff had welcomed the presentations because they wanted to find out more about these areas. Overall, I think it is essential to keep up to date with CPD, but to find very appropriate sessions that will also fit in with the teachers’ schedules.”

Professional recognition and status, and at least a level 5 qualification in learning and teaching.

Education and training professionals improve their practice from their very first work with learners. The stages of and levels of expertise gained need proper recognition and be accorded status. The professional body grades of membership give status reflecting expertise and experience and at levels beyond that reached through initial teacher education.
The learning and teaching profession is at least a level 5, degree level equivalent profession. We are not saying that learning cannot happen unless this is guided by a professional qualified to this level, and this would be a total caricature of holding the position that professional qualifications matter. We are saying that for the most effective and efficient learning, the role of a qualified learning and teaching professional is essential. The public purse should only be investing in the most effective learning.

The overwhelming majority of teachers and trainers in our sector associate their professionalism with the requirement to hold a professional qualification alongside continuing to stay up to date with teaching methods and industry practice. This was resoundingly confirmed in the Institute for Learning’s most recent member survey (with responses from 5,330 members) with 87 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing that teaching qualifications should be mandatory and on a national basis, and 89 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing that nationally recognised minimum teaching qualifications add to the status and standing of the profession, and therefore of the sector.

“Firstly I came from a career in Banking, so my first teaching role for adults was a real learning curve for me. Within Adult Education when I started to teach, your experience in your subject area was more relevant than having any teaching experience. Therefore when I attended the Stage One in teaching this is when my learning started; it has had a very positive impact on my teaching. I started as a Grade 3 tutor and progressed to being a Grade 1 tutor, this would not have been possible without training”

“My initial teacher education was absolutely essential in preparing me for teaching. I would not have had any idea where to start in practice without this. It encouraged me to consider aspects behind teaching and learning which I previously had no awareness of. It helped me to understand how people learn, how to vary activities in the classroom and cater for a range of different learning styles which differ from my own preferences, how to present information in engaging ways and how to approach learning groups, to build group spirit and encourage collaborative learning and support, as well as how to present myself and speak with clarity to groups of learners.”

“I progressed onto the diploma in teaching lifelong learning and skills (DTLLS) and this is where my passion truly took hold, I realised that I wanted to help others and teach them how to practise good teaching and learning. From being awarded DTLLS I applied through the Institute for Learning for my professional formation and now hold the professional status of qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS). This has helped me recognise the need for reflection and its true importance as a practitioner. I am now a teacher/trainer and manager of the preparatory teaching qualification for the lifelong learning sector (PTLLS) qualifications. I see my learners go from being anxious in front of their learners to being confident in their approach. They gain good knowledge of assessment in their teaching and how to embed equality and diversity and functional skills. I have seen learners who aspire to be teachers change from not being able to make eye contact with their peers to being confident professionals. They learn about the importance of good planning and lesson preparation. I went on to achieve a Masters Degree in Professional Practice and Lifelong Learning, and this has made me feel very proud, but also I now am able to teach the DTLLS qualification.”

The ability and space to make judgements and decisions based on knowledge and experience and so practising with autonomy, trust and accountability.

A hallmark of any professional is recognition of their ability to make judgements and decisions based on knowledge and experience. Trust from the public, from learners and from employers is necessary and deserved as it is coupled with individuals having a serious professional responsibility for high-quality services for learners. This requires more than a professional relationship between practitioners and their employers. It means that the sector as a whole, including awarding organisations and those who set
standards and specifications, need to recognise and appreciate that being too prescriptive is counterproductive as it undermines the professional identity and integrity of practitioners and their enthusiasm and confidence to be creative and developmental, and be their best for learners.

**A professionalised environment in which to operate, where it is the responsibility of leaders and managers to ensure a collaborative culture which secures excellence, resting on trust and confidence.**

We think that it is far too limited to think that staff training, professional updating, competency and behaviour are purely matters between employer and employee. We believe that it is essential to recognise the responsibility that individuals have for driving and improving their own professionalism and standards of practice, and this responsibility can be supported by their professional body.

To suggest the professionalism of teachers and trainers is owned by employers and is enshrined in employer/employee relations narrows down rather than strengthens individuals’ professionalism.

> “It is difficult to see what sort of claim to professionalism this could have given the unequal power relationship inherent between employer and employee or how this could retain any concept of autonomy for the professional or ‘power with’ those they serve. It offers an impoverished and very restrictive view of professionalism that does not extend beyond the confines of the organisation in which the professional is currently employed and it implies that a professional is only employed by one employer.” Sue Crowley, chair of the Institute for Learning

**Career pathways which offer suitable rewards to individual professionals as they demonstrate excellence.**

It is essential that teaching and training remain an aspirational career path for those entering the profession, as well those who are working in industry and considering a career change into teaching or teaching part time alongside their other work. There must be defined and flexible career pathways from trainee teacher or trainer on to advanced teaching and learning roles, teacher training roles and into management depending on the desires of the individual. This is important in order to recognise and fully utilise talent and skills.

**2) The learners’ and public interest is central**

The confidence and trust of the public.

Being involved in further education and training is and should be a household issue. Everyone should know someone, if they are not involved themselves, who is, in some way, a learner within the system whether that’s someone taking on a vocational qualification at work, someone taking an evening course at a community centre or a young person doing a part-time course alongside a part-time job. For this reason, the system should ensure that professional education and training practitioners can definitely enjoy the confidence of the public. Individual teachers and trainers have the most impact on learners and their success and make a significant contribution to the reputation of individual providers, the education and training profession and the wider sector. It is for this reason that it is important for the sector to be responsive to the needs of professional education and training practitioners.
The success of learners as paramount.

Teachers and trainers enter the profession for a variety of reasons but all share the common goal of enabling learners to achieve successful outcomes, whatever that might mean for them. Qualified and experienced professionals inspire them because of their ability and credibility. Teachers and trainers are often in some way role models for their learners so they must be recognised for the impact they have on the lives of individuals for them, their families and communities and the economy.

“Before doing initial teacher education (ITE), I had no experience in teaching but had a passion to teach. By attending ITE I learnt different skills and styles of teaching learners. I found some of the theory useful because I am able to comprehend more about the way in which information and ways of teaching that can have an impact on my learners.”

A passion for lifelong learning, both for themselves for their learners and the wider public.

Engaging in learning of all kinds enriches individual lives but also communities and wider society. This is a principle which applies equally to practitioners as it does to the learners who they teach. The ability for practitioners to instil a passion for lifelong learning can be just as powerful and beneficial as the curriculum being delivered. This means that opportunities should be afforded to them which enable them to be lifelong learners including through their ongoing professional development, as the more they learn and reflect on learning, the better they can become as teachers and trainers. Continuing professional development is central to the professional education and training practitioner.

“A teacher needs to be knowledgeable in their sector and be able to show passion and enthusiasm for the subject.”

“Most of the FE teachers I have met have a genuine love of their subjects and enjoy communicating this to their students in whatever manner works best for them… Adult learning should be about fun as well as grinding exams!”

3) Uphold the strong ethical values of the profession

A collective base of ethical values which must be reflected in how the individual represents the profession at work and in public domains.

The position of teacher or trainer is one of great trust and responsibility, including for young people and more vulnerable adults. Trustworthiness, integrity and honesty are vital values, as is the unconditional belief that individual learners all have great potential for succeeding with the right kinds of teaching or training and support. The social context of learning is crucial to its success, and professional teachers and trainers need the right attributes, values and qualities to build effective social relations that accelerate learning. The Institute for Learning upholds its code of professional practice and investigates alleged breaches of the code in the public interest.

The Institute for Learning’s values, developed with thousands of our members, are set out in our 20011-14 Strategy, and are:

The Institute for Learning’s core values for the profession

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<th>Professionalism</th>
<th>Strive for the highest standards in teaching and learning, and high levels of subject or</th>
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vocational expertise, placing the interests and progression of learners are the very heart of our practice. Members are dual professionals.

**Development and innovation**
Continually develop our expertise, individually and within communities of practice and are creative and innovative.

**Autonomy**
Should be trusted to exercise informed judgements in the interest of learners.

**Integrity**
Use our skills and knowledge and the resources at our disposal wisely to benefit all learners, the public and where we work, and are respected and trustworthy members of society.

**Equality**
Are celebrated for the diversity of our backgrounds and as positive role models for learners and colleagues, and should have fair opportunities for success in our careers, from whatever backgrounds.

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A personal commitment to use their expertise and skills for the benefit of the public at all times and be determined that their work upholds the values of equality and diversity.

At the heart of the further education and skills sector is diversity. Education and training practitioners are drawn from as diverse communities as their learners, both in terms of background and experiences as well as their subject or vocational areas. A credible profession seeks to be accessible to people from all backgrounds and none more so than in education and training. An educator’s own background and life experiences matter in a teaching and learning context and so attracting diverse individuals into the teaching and training profession to reflect the diversity of learners is important. Professional education and training practitioners are determined that each and every learner has meaningful and enriching experience of learning and is successful, whatever their background.

Professionals’ experience, expertise and views are shared generously by professionals to inform good national and local policy developments.

National policy needs to draw on the grass roots experience and views of education and training practitioners, who collectively work with over four million young and adult learners every year across the further education and skills sector. Since August 2010, the Institute for Learning has drawn on some 35,000 responses from members to surveys, and discussions. IfL has explored in-depth evidence and views on new policies needed and effective ways to implement policies that can make a difference for learners, the public and the further education and skills sector. Members’ views have also informed how leaders and managers can best enable and support them to be the best teachers and trainers for their learners. This is an important responsibility for the Institute for Learning as the professional body, and professionals reflecting and thinking about policies that work is also part of helping to give pride and confidence to the profession which in turn helps to improve practice further.
The role of the Institute for Learning as the professional body for learning and teaching professionals across the further education and skills sector.

The Institute for Learning’s sole objective is to improve teaching and learning, through supporting individual practitioners in membership of their professional body to be the best they can be in their practice across the full diversity of the sector. We do this by delivering our three strategic priorities: by giving benefits and especially professional development to practitioners; by according status in recognition of expertise; and by giving a voice so that learning and teaching professional can inform policy. Despite recent progress, teachers and trainers in further education and skills remain under recognised in the public domain and policy making circles, and in comparison with both other professional more widely such as engineers or accountants, and in comparison with schoolteachers or university teachers.

Membership of the Institute for Learning is part of individuals investing time and commitment to their own professionalism. The Institute, as is typical of professional bodies, also seeks to draw in new resources and financial investment that otherwise would not be available to professionals or the sector. In this way, we support the drive for excellence in teaching and training beyond what the state and employers can support.

Leaders and managers across the further education and skills sector benefit from encouraging and supporting teaching and training practitioners on their professional journey through IfL membership. Utilising professional body membership and the services for individuals also benefits colleges and providers, as we have described in this document, dual professionals are able to provide a holistic and powerful learning experience through course content that is contextualised for up-to-date industry practices, developments and leading edge teaching, learning and assessment methods. The Institute for Learning seeks to ensure that quality of teaching and learning is at its highest possible and promotes a constructive dialogue between industry and providers and teaching and learning professionals.

The Institute for Learning is independent and was formed back in 2002 by teachers, employers and unions. Membership for the first five years was on a voluntary basis and at the request of the sector, the Institute was given three regulatory responsibilities from September 2007: to register all teachers and trainers in the sector, to monitor continuing professional development of at least 30 hours a year, pro rata for part-time teachers, and to award the professional status of QTLS or ATLS for new entrants to the professions after 2007. This latter regulation has not been in place as the period has not yet ended, although to date over 10,000 individuals have gained QTLS. The Institute for Learning has delivered the regulatory responsibilities during the period whilst government was paying the fees for individuals until 2011-12, and in as developmental way as possible rather than a narrow compliance way and by offering additional services such as a professional journal and local and regional professional development opportunities to support practitioners in their work.

The Institute for Learning is returning to its roots as a voluntary membership professional body where individual learning and teaching practitioners are given professional recognition for being qualified and expert, and we will welcome membership of those who are always striving for excellence in their practice and we commit to both celebrating and supporting them. Years of educational research has highlighted that teachers want the autonomy and trust afforded to other professionals working in the public interest who are qualified and experts in their field. So it is no surprise that when IfL members were asked about their professionalism and what they want as professionals the overwhelming response in 2012, based on 5,330 members responses, was that they want to be trusted to use their own judgement, be required to hold a teaching qualification, have access to a broad range of professional development opportunities and a code of ethics or professional practice to protect the reputation of the profession and the professionals working within it.

“If we want to be regarded as professionals and treated as such…we must have mandatory qualifications, disciplinary codes and requirements to keep up to date (real CPD)”
“Give us opportunities, but trust us to do the right thing, and to enhance our own careers!”

The Institute for Learning as the professional body for education and training professionals is politically neutral and is passionately focused on professional matters and excellence for learners, and is:

- the only body whose sole object is to improve teaching and learning and so gives a relentless focus to this for practitioners, as the professional body for individual teachers and trainers

- persistently attractive to large numbers of practitioners across the diversity of the sector including further education colleges, work based learning, adult and community learning, offender learning

- in very frequent touch with the profession and consults and supports them widely:
  - 35,000 responses from members to policy surveys since August 2010;
  - 18,000 members supported in their professional development by our regional advisers in 2011;
  - InTuition, IfL’s quarterly professional journal and fortnightly enewsletters going to our current 75,000 members
  - A rigorous knowledge base and expertise in the kinds of professional development that works and those that do not, based on over 50,000 practitioners’ experiences and research
  - 112,375 phone calls or emails made to the IfL membership team in 2011

- Experience of rigorous standards and assessment for and conferral of professional status, already to more than 10,000 individual teachers and trainers who have gained QTLS to date, supporting them to be the best they can be:
  - 77.5% said that undertaking professional formation leading to QTLS increased their confidence in their teaching practice
  - 74% said that undertaking professional formation definitely improved their teaching practice

- Experience of developing, upholding and enforcing professional code of practice with a proper legal process aligned with the range of legislation, including human rights:
  - 35 cases opened with allegations of the code being breached in 2011,
  - several individuals, where there were serious breaches are barred from teaching

- close working links with the further education and teaching and research community in order to support learning and teaching professionals well, including with:
  - Institute of Education
  - Oxford University
  - Wolverhampton University
  - Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training
  - Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning,
  - Worldskills UK project, and delivering of master classes
  - developing links with the University of Cambridge
  - LSIS
  - The Skills Commission

- We network professionals through virtual and social media as well as through events to support excellent learning and teaching:
  - Over 20 online subject communities
  - 10 regional advisers supporting individuals across the country

- IfL is the competent authority on recognition of international FE teacher training qualifications.
Also see the key publications from the Institute for Learning, including:

2011 Impact Review

2011-14 Strategy – Supporting professionalism

Brilliant teaching and training in FE and Skills: A guide to effective CPD for teachers, trainers and leaders

2010 – 11 IfL review of CPD, CPD for the future: the networked professional

2009 – 10 IfL review of CPD, Excellence in professional development: looking back, looking forward

2008 – 9 IfL review of CPD, Making a difference for teachers, trainers and learners

IfL and 157 Leading Learning (2012)

IfL preparatory research to inform the work of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (2012)