

When the object becomes the subject: Redefining the Teachers' Standards as Learner Standards

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In England, the Teacher Standards are often used formatively to guide quality improvement towards a final summative, quality assurance process which takes place to ensure that the standards have been met and the trainee teacher can be awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). In this blog we posit that the mechanism that guides these improvement processes for novices directs them mostly towards their own teacher role with not enough focus on student learning and progress, something which Coe *et al* (2014) describe as the reoccurring 'yardstick' in defining effective teaching.

Models from Dreyfus (2004); Menter (2010) and more recently Hendry (2020) all seem to demonstrate that initially there is a natural and often subconscious tendency by new teachers to deconstruct complex classroom processes into structured, simplistic rules focusing solely upon their own teaching performances and imitation of mentors, with a somewhat limited awareness of learners and learning. The phrasing of the Teacher Standards could potentially compound this by redirecting new teachers unwittingly towards more performative aspects of their own role, hence becoming a 'reformed teacher' (Ball 2003). This leads to them valuing what they deem as positive outputs and performances to demonstrate their worth and by doing so improving standards for learners and learning may be lost as any training or assessment may only be measuring teaching performances rather than teaching quality.

Consequently, it would seem obvious that any processes around awarding QTS should embrace this focus upon learning. A change in focus may appear relatively simple to expert colleagues who have grasped what Meyer and Land (2005) define as a 'threshold concept', something that opens up a previously inaccessible way of thinking, but the definition of and relationship between, teaching and learning is not a straightforward concept for novice teachers to acquire.

Upon closer inspection, each standard is preceded by the statement, 'a teacher must' with the pupils either being mentioned as the object of the teachers' performances or not mentioned at all.

S1: 'A teacher must set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils'

S6: 'A teacher must give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage pupils to respond to the feedback.'

S4: 'A teacher must impart knowledge and develop understanding through effective use of lesson time'

S3: 'A teacher must have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas, foster and maintain pupils'

We propose that if the object of the standard became the subject and focused on the learners, then the focus of the teachers would directly follow, meaning that teaching quality, by Coe's definition, would undoubtedly improve. We would describe these informally as 'learner standards.'

S1: 'All learners are able to respond to high expectations that inspire, motivate and challenge them'.

S6: 'All learners are able to receive regular feedback both verbally and through accurate marking and be encouraged to respond to feedback'.

S4: 'All learners are able to acquire new knowledge and develop understanding through the effective use of lesson time'.

S3: 'All learners are taught accurate knowledge of the relevant subject that fosters and maintains their interest and addresses their misunderstandings'

The debate regarding teaching versus learning is not a new one but it is one that has developed added interest with the advent of the ECF with many new trainees viewing it as a 'checkbox' activity (NAHT 2021). Our proposed changes would tackle this by switching the threshold concept away from 'being a teacher' to 'ensuring children are learning' and when teacher's liminal state clears and frames of reference are solidified, we are left with educators who are focused on the learning rather than merely seeing the teaching standards as a way of guiding their own performance, and with it the true depth of teaching and learning as a complex social process is revealed.

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