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Rusznyak, L.; Kimathi, F.

2018

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/31740

Rusznyak, L., & Kimathi, F. (2018). Advancing professional teaching in South Africa: Lessons learnt from policy frameworks that have regulated teachers' work. Education as Change, 22(3), 1-25.

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Article

Advancing Professional Teaching in South Africa: Lessons Learnt from Policy Frameworks That Have Regulated Teachers' Work

Faith Kimathi
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8885-7994
University of the Witwatersrand,
South Africa
ffkananu@gmail.com

Lee Rusznyak
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6835-8215
University of the Witwatersrand,
South Africa
lee.rusznyak@wits.ac.za

Abstract

Teaching and teacher education in South Africa have emerged from a highly fragmented past. Teachers from diverse backgrounds, experiences and qualifications find themselves working together in schools where they do not necessarily have access to a common language of practice, nor a shared understanding of professional teaching practices. To address these challenges, the South African Council of Educators (SACE) has developed a set of professional teaching standards for use in the South African context. This is not the first time a policy framework has tried to articulate and direct teachers' work. This paper analyses four other frameworks that have been used to regulate, monitor and evaluate the work of South African teachers over the past two decades. These other frameworks are The Roles of the Educator and Their Associated Competences, the SACE Code of Professional Ethics, the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) and the Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher. Our analysis shows how these frameworks present teaching in ways that constrain teacher professionalism in some ways. They address some aspects of professional teaching while ignoring others. In particular, none of them adequately acknowledge the relations between knowledge, skills, judgement and the ethical orientations that underpin professional teaching. The ways in which previous frameworks have constrained teacher professionalism has important implications for SACE if its set of professional teaching standards is to more successfully enhance teacher professionalism in the South African context.

Keywords: teaching; professional teaching standards; SACE; professionalism; policy; teachers

UNISA university of south africa PRESS

Education as Change
https://upjournals.co.za/index.php/EAC
Volume 22 | Number 3 | 2018 | #4042 | 25 pages

https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/4042
ISSN 1947-9417 (Online)
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Introduction

Over the past two decades, there have been four policy frameworks that have sought to regulate and evaluate the practices of South African teachers. These four frameworks are (1) The Roles of the Educator and Their Associated Competences, which formed a part of the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE 2000a), (2) the SACE Code of Professional Ethics (SACE 2002), (3) the criteria for performance evaluation of teachers in the Integrated Quality Management System (ELRC 2003), and (4) the Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher (DHET 2015). Collectively, these four frameworks have stipulated expectations of teachers' conduct and have provided the criteria used to evaluate and remunerate teachers' work. They have also informed the design of pre-service teacher education curricula and the construction of continuing development initiatives for in-service teachers. Despite the intention of these policies, teaching expertise remains highly uneven across differently qualified teachers (CHE 2010). Furthermore, there is still little by way of a common language of teaching practice, potentially constraining the extent to which teachers can engage meaningfully in professional dialogue within their school and district communities.

In fulfilling its legislative mandate, SACE, together with other stakeholders (including the Department of Basic Education [DBE], the Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], the Council of Higher Education, JET Education Services, academics, teacher unions, district officials, teacher educators and teachers), has developed a set of standards for professional teaching in South Africa. Professional teaching standards have the potential to introduce a common understanding about quality teaching with a shared language of practice. It is now an opportune time critically to review the conceptions of teaching professionalism advanced by the previous and existing policy frameworks. This paper will then consider the implications of this analysis for the set of professional teaching standards developed by SACE.

International and National Context of this Study

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) declared that teaching is a profession as teachers provide a "public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialised skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study" (UNESCO and ILO 2008, 22). These organisations also call for teachers to have a "sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of all pupils in their charge" (2008, 22). Attracting quality teachers, retaining them, and providing them with necessary skills and support have been identified as crucial factors for improving learning outcomes (UNESCO 2011). Education 2030 Framework for Action therefore calls for a "substantial increase in qualified teachers through the betterment of their training, recruitment, retention, status, working conditions and motivation" (WEF 2015, 54). The development of professional standards for teachers is considered an important lever in addressing challenges facing education systems within developing countries (Gallie and Keevy

2014). Standards emphasise 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" (Gallie and Keevy 2014, 5). Some countries (including Chile, Namibia, United States of America, and Australia) have developed professional teaching standards that present a conception of teaching as a knowledge-based professional endeavour rather than as routine work (Gallie and Keevy 2014).

Since the beginning of South Africa's democracy, there have been several policy changes that have sought to professionalise teaching. First, the teacher education sector was consolidated through national policy. Under apartheid, teacher training was highly fragmented, both racially and geographically, and managed by 19 different government departments, each with their own requirements. Some teacher training was pitched at a low level of cognitive demand, where an emphasis on pedagogies for rote learning and basic classroom management skills was the norm. This kind of teacher training was intended to produce docile and compliant workers who would implement (but not question or subvert) apartheid curricula (Chisholm 2012; Jansen 2004; Welch 2002). When teacher education was moved to the higher education sector, some provincially run teacher training colleges amalgamated with universities. A substantial body of national research argued for greater attention to content knowledge, studies in the theoretical foundations of education and opportunities to develop the pedagogical reasoning of prospective teachers in relation to their university-based coursework and in the context of work-based learning (e.g. Adler and Reed 2002; Lewin, Samuel, and Sayed 2003; Morrow 2007; Taylor and Vinjevold 1999). Since then, all qualifying teachers need to possess a four-year Bachelor of Education degree, or a three-year degree and one-year Postgraduate Certificate of Education.

Another initiative to advance teacher professionalisation was the establishment of a professional body for teachers (DoE 2000b). SACE registers qualified teachers, and endorses ongoing professional development initiatives. It is further mandated to establish a set of professional teaching standards for South African teachers. Recently, the *Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011–2025* (DBE and DHET 2011) presented a strategy to improve the quality of the national education system. One of the four major outputs espoused in the strategic plan is to enhance teaching professionalism in South Africa. Activity Four of the strategic plan outlines the need to support the obligation and responsibility of SACE to design and develop teacher knowledge and practice standards that can support the implementation, management and quality assurance of continuous professional teacher development (DBE and DHET 2011).

As SACE fulfils its mandate to produce a set of standards for professional teaching, this is a crucial moment in which the successes and failures of past policies that were created to support teacher professionalism need to be considered. State regulation has met minimal success in advancing teacher professionalism. This may partly be attributed to a

legacy of distrust inherited from the inspectorate systems and the bureaucratic regulation of teachers' work. It may also be due to the vast differences in the technical approaches to teacher training employed in many teacher training colleges compared to the knowledge-informed practice approaches used with present pre-service teachers in higher education institutions. These differences may have contributed to a situation where little common understanding exists between new and more established teachers regarding what constitutes professional classroom practices.

It is important to bear in mind that professional standards for teachers should not be regarded as a "magic bullet" that is able to solve the complex problems within the education system. It is, however, crucial that the conversations about teachers' work and their professionalism do not divert attention away from the responsibility of the state to ensure that all public schools are adequately resourced and meet the norms and standards for school infrastructure. Broader problems such as inequalities in society, dysfunctional school management, inadequate infrastructure, and inequitable resource allocation continue to plague the public schooling sector. These have an impact on the work teachers do (Graven 2014; Lam, Ardington, and Leibbrandt 2011). Nonetheless, professional teaching standards may have enormous value in drawing teachers' attention to those aspects of practice that research shows have the greatest impact on promoting quality learning (Taylor et al. 2017).

Literature Review

It is important for this analysis to distinguish between the *professionalisation of teaching* and *teacher professionalism* (De Clercq 2013; Hargreaves 2000). Advancing the professionalisation of teaching is a sociological project aimed at improving the status and working conditions of teachers. Enhancing teacher professionalism, on the other hand, is a pedagogic endeavour aimed at improving the quality of teachers' work within the classroom. The development of standards for professional teaching is relevant both to teacher professionalisation (because standards provide councils with authority over practice) and to teacher professionalism (because standards address the nature, quality, integrity and consistency of teachers' core work). This paper, however, will focus on the extent to which policies have constrained or enabled the advancement of teacher professionalism.

The Characteristics of Traditional Professional Practices

Professional practices are socially constructed activities that provide communities with services towards the common good (Abbott 1988; Maclntyre 1984). The actions of professional practitioners are guided by specialised knowledge, skilful action, and an ethical imperative to act in the best interests of those they serve (Gamble 2010; MacBeath 2012). On the basis of specialised knowledge and formal learning, members of a profession should be able to make rational, conceptually informed decisions in complex and sometimes unpredictable situations. These conceptually informed insights enable

them to learn by reflecting on their accumulated personal experiences. Because of the specialised knowledge that underpins their practice, professionals require an extensive formal preparation programme and induction opportunities to develop associated skills that are enacted responsively according to the demands of different contexts (Elmore 2008; MacBeath 2012).

The work of professionals is traditionally overseen by professional councils who work in fairly autonomous ways and are legally mandated to register professionals for practice. They are also responsible for establishing and upholding codes of conduct and standards for professional practice. Professional councils have the authority to revoke a member's registration and/or licence to practise should they bring the profession into disrepute by engaging in forms of negligence or misconduct.

Should Teaching be Regarded as a Professional Practice?

Internationally, there has been extensive debate about the extent to which teaching can be regarded as a professional practice.

While ILO and UNESCO have declared it so, we need to explore what this means theoretically. We briefly review three perspectives on this question. First, when teaching is conceptualised as non-professional "labour," teachers are regarded as workers with occupational competence obtained through skills-based training. As workers, teachers would be expected to implement an inflexible curriculum with scripted lessons designed to achieve the desired outcomes (Hoban 2002; Turner-Bisset 2012). There is little or no room for their discretion or innovation. Second, there are those who maintain that teaching cannot be regarded as a profession because it's a highly personalised endeavour, deeply connected to each teacher as an individual, and to the specificities of each context (Carr 2006; Korthagen 2004; Schön 1987). An individualised view of teaching requires only personal development. Without communal ownership of shared practices, professional practice cannot be realised. Third, as a professional practice, teaching is understood as intricate and unnatural work that requires conceptually informed choices that are contextually appropriate (Ball and Forzani 2009; Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999; Darling-Hammond 2014; Morrow 2007; Shulman 1987). Professional teaching is "shaped and guided by the theory that informs it, and by the concepts, beliefs and principles of those who participate in it" (Morrow 2007, 77). It is this third body of literature that has informed the policy changes in South Africa from the provision of skills-based teacher training to knowledge-based teacher education.

It is widely acknowledged that teaching does not meet all the traditional characteristics of professional practices, including the criterion of autonomy from the state (Gamble 2010; Hargreaves and Fullan 2012; Taylor and Taylor 2013). Because teaching draws on both disciplinary knowledge and empirical evidence from the field of practice, some theorists have argued that the knowledge base for teachers lacks the disciplinary robustness of other professions (Taylor and Taylor 2013; Young and Muller 2014). Despite this, many

scholars regard teaching as a "quasi-profession" (Taylor 2014), a "semi profession" (Gamble 2010), or a "newcomer" to the league of professions (Muller 2009). The quality of teaching, Morrow (2007) argues, depends on the knowledge and the quality of thought of its practitioners. Teaching conceptualised as a professional practice involves the integration of different knowledge bases. Informed judgement is considered essential for teachers to select, sequence and represent knowledge for learning, design appropriate learning resources and devise assessment tasks that interrogate learners' understanding.

The intellectual work that informs teaching practice became a focus after the groundbreaking work of Shulman (1987), Grossman (1990), Darling-Hammond (1997) and others. Shulman's (1987) seminal paper identified the knowledge bases on which professional teaching rests. It included Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which he argued is the unique knowledge of professional teachers. PCK is generally understood to be the blend of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge that enables teachers to represent knowledge in ways that are understandable to the diverse learners they teach. Although PCK has been further theorised (e.g. Gess-Newsome and Carlson 2013), instances of PCK have been found to be highly topic- and context-specific, and therefore difficult to codify (Loughran, Mulhall, and Berry 2004). Nevertheless, the critical importance of teachers' PCK for improving consistency of quality teaching in the South African context is foregrounded both in research (e.g. Mavhunga and Rollnick 2013; Rusznyak and Walton 2011; Venkat and Adler 2014) and in policy (e.g. DHET 2015). Teachers' construction of PCK requires that they draw on distinct knowledge bases of teaching (including content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of learners in their classes) in relation to one another in order to inform their classroom actions.

The concept of teachers' professional capital (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012) extends the conception of teacher professionalism put forward by Shulman (1999). Teacher professional capital, Hargreaves and Fullan argue, is the capacity of teachers to make ethical, informed, rational decisions in complex situations. This manifests as a "relentless, expert-driven pursuit in serving their students and their communities, and in learning, always learning, how to do that [well]" (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, 5). Their conception of teacher professionalism incorporates several of the classic criteria for professional practice and foregrounds the capacity of teachers to make informed diagnostic assessments and interpret classroom events in conceptually informed ways.

Our review of the literature enables us to distil six criteria relevant to professional practices of teachers. First, professional teachers are guided by an ethical obligation to act in the best educational interests of learners. Second, professional teachers have access to a specialised knowledge base that informs their practice. Third, their specialised theoretical and contextual knowledge informs their capacity to make reasoned judgements appropriate in a given situation. The fourth aspect is that professional teachers provide consistently skilled performance in the work they do in their classrooms. Fifth,

professional teachers develop cooperative working relationships with learners and other stakeholders, including but not limited to parents, caregivers and colleagues. Finally, professional teachers are committed to personal growth and the development of their practice. These six criteria provide a conceptual lens that can guide our analysis of the policy frameworks under consideration in this paper.

Methodology

This paper analyses four policy frameworks that have preceded the initiative headed by SACE to develop a set of national standards for professional teaching. These four policy frameworks have presented various conceptions of competent teaching. The frameworks that will be considered in this paper are the Roles of the Educator (DoE 2000a), the SACE Code of Professional Ethics (SACE 2002), the IQMS (ELRC 2003) and the Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher (DHET 2015). This paper addresses the following research question: To what extent have these previous frameworks presented South African teachers with access to a coherent account of professional teaching practices?

In our analysis of the policy documents, we scrutinised the form and structure of each framework. We identified the expectations of teachers within each framework, as well as what messages each transmits about the nature of expertise in teaching. The criteria used to describe teachers' work were then analysed in relation to each of the six criteria of teacher professionalism that we drew from our literature review. We considered the extent to which each framework presents teaching as a professional practice.

A necessary part of policy analysis includes how perceived problems with the status quo are depicted. Policy changes are given as a rationale for addressing a range of issues or problems (Bacchi 2009). When analysing policy, Bacchi (2009) argues it is useful to identify the nature of the "problem" that the policy seeks to address, and the assumptions on which the "problem" is framed. She suggests that attention is paid to how subjects (like teachers) are portrayed in a rationale for policy change, and that consideration is given to what is likely to remain unchanged. In the discussion and analysis of the four frameworks selected for this paper, we consider aspects of policy analysis advocated by Bacchi's framework.

Before analysing the extent to which each framework addresses teacher professionalism, it is important to provide a brief description of each and its articulated purpose.

Framework 1: The Roles of the Educator and Their Associated Competences (Norms and Standards for Educators)

The Norms and Standards for Educators (NSE) (DoE 2000a) was the first post-democratic education policy that was applicable to all teachers nationally. The policy sought to address the vastly different and fragmented provision of teacher education nationally. It assumed that greater levels of uniformity would be achieved by stipulating

required outcomes of teacher education programmes. It therefore specified the nature of teachers' work, and the state's expectations of them. It also intended to provide a curriculum guide for higher education institutions to "develop programmes and qualifications that will be recognised by the Department of Education for purposes of employment" (DoE 2000a, 1). This policy was conceptualised around seven different roles that the state expected each competent educator to fulfil. These roles encompassed the following:

1. Learning mediator
2. Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials
3. Leader, administrator and manager
4. Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
5. Community, citizenship and pastoral role
6. Assessor
7. Learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist

A list of 132 outcomes accompanied the seven defined roles. In the tradition of outcomes-based education, the policy specified lists of competences and through backward design, teacher educators were expected to conceptualise coherent, robust and comprehensive programmes for prospective teachers. The outcomes were divided into three groups: *Practical competences* refer to a teacher's "ability, in an authentic context, to consider a range of possibilities for action, make considered decisions about which possibility to follow and to perform the chosen action" (DoE 2000a, 4). *Foundational competences* demonstrate the teachers' "understanding of the knowledge and thinking which underpins the action taken" (DoE 2000a, 4). Finally, *reflexive competences* refer to the "ability to integrate and connect performances and decision making with understanding and with the ability to adapt to change and unforeseen circumstances and explain the reasons behind these actions" (DoE 2000a, 4). It was anticipated that all these competences would come together in coherent ways in moments of practice.

The original NSE policy intended its content to establish "key strategic objectives for the development of learning programmes, qualifications and standards for educators" (DoE 2000a, 9). Despite the extensive lists, the structure of the NSE potentially prevented access to the inner logic of teaching—each defined role was treated as a discrete aspect of practice. The relationships and interactions between the roles, knowledge and skills were thus obscured. It was also criticised as being so exhaustive that any individual employee or classroom teacher could not possibly fulfil its requirements within a typical working

schedule (Morrow 2007). Teachers who strived to follow the standards would soon become overworked, demoralised and frustrated (Morrow 2007).

Framework 2: The SACE Code of Professional Ethics

The SACE Code of Professional Ethics was developed in 2002 to address the "unacceptable practices perpetuated by certain members of the teaching profession," and is directed specifically at classroom teachers (SACE 2002, 1). Its 46 statements of what ethical teachers should and should not do are clustered according to the relationships between teachers and those they interact with in the course of their work. This includes teacher behaviour in relation to interactions with learners, the parents of learners they teach and the community they serve, their colleagues and peers, officials from the state as employer, and the council itself. Within these categories, the SACE Code of Professional Ethics claims to describe "the values which should govern an educator's working life" (SACE 2002). The statements focus primarily on the observable actions that teachers take as they behave ethically, and those they must avoid, in their interactions with others.

In June 2009, aspects of the SACE Code of Professional Ethics were converted into a pledge (SACE 2009), requiring teachers to uphold the quality of education with a promise to:

- advance the education and the development of learners as individuals
- respect the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice
- develop loyalty to, and respect for the profession
- be punctual, enthusiastic, well prepared for lessons and of sober mind and body
- improve my own knowledge and skills base to be more effective
- maintain good communication between teachers and learners, among teachers themselves, and between teachers and parents
- provide information to parents on their children's progress on a regular basis
- eliminate unprofessional behaviour, such as teacher-pupil relationships, drunkenness, the use of drugs, assault, sexual harassment and other infringements, and
- make themselves available for extra-mural activities.

The Code of Professional Ethics enables SACE to hold teachers to account for violating the code. Formal disciplinary processes may lead to the council revoking registration with

it, which is required for employment as a teacher. According to SACE, the primary purpose of the code is to "provoke thinking, debate and discussion" about ethical issues in education, and it articulates a hope that teachers will engage with its contents "individually, in pairs, or in a group with their colleagues" (SACE 2009, 1). It therefore hopes to "sharpen [teachers'] understanding of ethical issues" and to empower teachers to act ethically in the context of their everyday professional life.

Framework 3: The Integrated Quality Management System

The problem that led to the development of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) (ELRC 2003, 1) is the "unsatisfactory results" seen in terms of learner achievement in South African schools. For two decades after the end of apartheid, teachers were not "subjected to any kind of evaluation." It is argued that excellence in the performance of teachers is crucial for the provision of quality education to all children. It came from a belief that teachers "want and need feedback, not only on the act of teaching, but also on the results of teaching." The IQMS is a performance management framework with three articulated purposes: the developmental appraisal of teachers, performance management for promotion and salary progression purposes, and to enable whole-school evaluation. The IQMS instrument has two parts. The first (made up of 4 performance standards) is for observation of teachers in relation to their classroom practices, and the second (made up of 3 performance standards) is related to the extra-mural work of Level 1 educators, which falls outside of their classroom teaching. Together, they offer seven performance competences against which teachers' work is evaluated.

Teachers' competence (ELRC 2003, 8–22) is rated according to their demonstrated ability to:

- create a positive learning environment
- demonstrate knowledge of the curriculum and subjects
- plan and present lessons
- assess learning and achievement
- participate in professional development initiatives
- sustain collegial relationships within the school
- contribute to an extra-curricular programme

The seven performance standards are further elaborated into a list of 28 observable and measurable criteria. A teacher's performance is measured against each criterion, which specifies level descriptors on a four-point rating scale. "Unacceptable" practice according

to a particular criterion translates into a score of one, whereas a teacher rated as "outstanding" on a criterion is awarded a score of four. The competence of a teacher's practice is therefore condensed into an arithmetic score out of 112. A score of at least 56 is required for annual salary progression, and a score of at least 76 is required for promotion purposes.

In line with an outcomes-based approach to education, the IQMS provides the scope for members of the school's management team and a selected peer to assess the competence of teachers based on their ability to perform specified tasks satisfactorily. The IQMS thus foregrounds the observable, skills-based aspects of teachers' work. The non-visible aspects (such as specialist knowledge, wise judgement, reflective practice and ethical orientation) are ignored and are less consequential for the purposes of promotion and salary progression.

If teacher professionalism requires a relational understanding of the ways in which knowledge, moral imperatives, skills and reflection work together in exemplary practice, the reduction of teaching competence to a numerical value could restrict possibilities for teachers to understand the inner logic of teaching as a professional practice. Research has suggested that the IQMS tool is primarily used for promotion rather than for its intended developmental purpose (Pylman 2015). The structure of IQMS may even establish conditions that discourage robust self-reflection and critique. If such reflection is truthfully done, areas that need development will come to light, and this will have negative salary and promotion repercussions. Under such conditions, teachers would be less likely to engage in this necessary critique of their practice. The structure of the IQMS therefore potentially constrains the very process it claims to promote.

It is noteworthy that this policy is silent on the contextual challenges in which teachers work. Teachers are thus allocated the full responsibility of providing quality education to learners they teach.

Framework 4: Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher

A review of professional education programmes by the Council on Higher Education (CHE 2010) provided the impetus for another policy change in the requirements for qualifications in teacher education. The findings of the CHE report (2010) indicate that many initial teacher education programmes experienced "tension between the theoretical and conceptual rigour expected of a professional degree and the vocation-specific training of teachers to meet the expectations of employers who focus on effective implementation of existing school curriculum policy" (CHE 2010, 103). There was thus "unevenness of quality" of programmes that seek to prepare students who can "enter the teaching profession with an appropriate blend of theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge, and the capacity to manage learning in diverse social and educational contexts" (2010, 102). A revised legislative framework, the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) (DHET 2015), was developed to ensure that teacher

education providers move away from a purely skills-based training and bring the knowledge bases of teaching to the fore. It defines the "knowledge mix" between theoretical, contextual, practical and pedagogical knowledge. It furthermore gives highly specified requirements about how much of an initial teacher education programme is to be pitched at various levels of abstraction and complexity.

An appendix in the policy describes "The Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher," structured as a list of 11 statements. These are arranged thematically, and are sequenced in a way that loosely follows a teaching cycle of understanding content knowledge, transforming knowledge into learning opportunities, working with learners to enable their access to that knowledge, assessing their learning and working within the school community.

The purpose of the Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher is twofold: it is primarily directed at higher education institutions offering pre-service teacher qualifications to describe the expected outcomes in terms of what graduates should know and be able to do by the end of their initial teacher education programmes, and to inform employers of what they can expect from newly qualified teachers. The policy stipulates the purposes, knowledge mixes and practical learning to be included in teacher education programmes, all of which had to be reconceptualised and reaccredited in relation to its requirements. In addition to the specifications of teacher education qualifications, MRTEQ (DHET 2011, and revised in 2015) contains an appendix that stipulates 11 basic competences that should be expected of all beginner teachers, regardless of their qualification path (DHET 2015, 64). It is envisaged that the knowledge mix of disciplinary, pedagogical, situational and foundational knowledge, as well as practical learning contained in a well conceptualised teacher education qualification, will empower newly qualified teachers to have attained these competences.

Critical Evaluation of the Frameworks

Using the criteria for professional teaching presented in the literature review, we now turn to the set of six criteria of competent teaching as reflected in the four frameworks under review. We present a discussion about the extent to which the four frameworks address each of the identified criteria for advancing teacher professionalism, which is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: A summary of teacher professionalism as represented in the four frameworks

Criteria	***Roles of the Educator***	***SACE Code of Professional Ethics***	***IQMS***	***Competences of a Beginner Teacher (MRTEQ)***
1. Professional teaching is based on ethical obligation and moral imperatives	Respect Diversity	Some attributes are present, but emphasis is on conduct	Absent	Implied
2. Professional teaching rests on a specialised knowledge base	Present, but separated from skills and thinking	Absent	Absent	Knowledge informs skills and thinking
3. Professional teaching requires informed judgement in context	Present, but separated from knowledge, and skills	Absent	Absent	Implied
4. Professional teaching is associated with consistently skilful performance	Present, but separated from knowledge and judgement	Absent	Present	Knowledge and skills work together for effective practice
5. Professional teaching contributes to a network of community-based working relationships	Present	Present	Present	Present
6. Professional teachers strive for personal growth and development	Present	Present	Present	Present

We will now consider each of the six criteria in turn, and analyse the implications of the frameworks for how they acted to enable or constrain teacher professionalism.

Professional Teaching Is Based on Ethical Obligation and Moral Imperatives

The SACE Code of Professional Ethics stipulates the expected behaviour of teachers in the workplace. It repeatedly articulates the importance of respect for others and for diversity. Teachers are required to be compassionate, respectful, cooperative, law-abiding, and to have integrity. They are to uphold the Constitution and work towards promoting human rights, including gender equality. It stipulates a list of actions expected of ethical teachers (e.g. to declare business interests to an employer). In addition, it lists 15 actions or kinds of behaviour that ethical teachers should "avoid" or "refrain from," six of which relate to abstaining from sexual misconduct with learners and colleagues.

Another two articulate an expectation that teachers should refuse bribes and self-enrichment in relation to their work. The SACE Code of Professional Ethics alludes to many important values that teachers draw on in their daily work. However, it reads primarily as a list of "don'ts" that define misconduct of teachers. Very few speak directly to the ethical underpinnings of professional teachers and the moral obligation teachers have towards the well-being of children and securing their learning.

The other three frameworks pay little attention to the attitudes, beliefs, moral imperatives and ethical orientation that underpin ethical teaching practices. These dimensions of professional teaching cannot be observed nor measured. The IQMS has no criteria to consider the ethical orientations, knowledge and reasoning that undergird wise judgement in classroom performance. Only one attitude is explicitly identified in the Roles of the Educator, and that is that teachers should "respect diversity." The Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher goes further in this regard, alluding to teachers' responsibility within the prevalent South African context where many learners' basic needs are not adequately met. It expects that newly qualified teachers "teach in a manner that includes all learners" and are able to "identify learning or social problems and work in partnership with professional service providers to address these" (DHET 2015, 62). Because the IQMS focuses exclusively on some of the observable parts of teachers' work, moral imperatives are not listed as criteria for effective teaching and may appear as unimportant for salary progression and promotion.

The Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher requires of newly qualified teachers to "display appropriate values" (DHET 2015, 62). The nature of these "appropriate values" is left unspecified. Newly qualified teachers are also expected to have a "positive work ethic" (2015, 62), which corresponds with a requirement in the SACE Code of Professional Ethics that a teacher is "not negligent or indolent in the performance of his or her professional duties" (SACE 2002). Whereas the SACE Code of Professional Ethics elaborates on the nature of ethical conduct and the characteristics of ethical relationships, the other three frameworks fall short on acknowledging the moral imperatives that underpin the daily classroom work that teachers do. None address teachers as agents of change who have an obligation to identify and dismantle exclusionary structures within their school institutions that may affect vulnerable learners.

Our main concern is that the ethical dimensions of teacher professionalism are portrayed primarily as a list of "dos" and "don'ts." The frameworks foreground behaviour and conduct, and values are either treated on their own, ignored or mentioned as vaguely expressed attributes of teachers disconnected from their work with knowledge and learners. In this sense, none of these frameworks adequately reveal to teachers the relations between core ethical orientations and the day-to-day work they do in their classroom.

Professional Teaching Rests on a Specialised Knowledge Base

There are 47 competences associated with the Roles of the Educator (DoE 2000a) that specify knowledge or understanding that the state regarded as essential for teachers to know in the context of a post-apartheid South Africa. Four of these relate to knowing and understanding the content knowledge of the subject to be taught. Nine of them refer to the general pedagogical knowledge associated with generic teaching practices (such as "understanding various approaches to the management of classrooms" [DoE 2000a, 18]). Four of them describe the importance of selection and sequencing of knowledge to understanding a curriculum. A mere five address PCK which is widely considered the basis of teachers' claim to expert professional knowledge (Shulman 1987). In one of the five competences identified, it is stated that the teacher should "understand the learning area to be taught, including appropriate content knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and how to integrate this knowledge with other subjects" (DoE 2000a, 17). Four competences address knowledge of how children learn. By far, the strongest emphasis of knowledge and understanding in the Norms and Standards for Educators (with 14 competences) is on teachers' knowledge of contextual and learner diversity and the social and economic challenges facing society.

The structure of the Norms and Standards for Educators report separates the knowledge-based (foundational) competences from the practical (skills-based) competences. This separation of knowledge and skills is even more pronounced in the IQMS, where teachers' competence is evaluated entirely against observable skills. Both frameworks set up a knowledge/skill or theory/practice divide. The Basic Competences of Beginner Teachers, in contrast, does not segregate knowledge from practice. Six out of the 11 competences take the form that teachers need to "know [xxx] in order to [yyy]" or "know [xxx] so as to [yyy]." Knowledge is thus presented as essential (although not sufficient) for effective and skilful practice.

The SACE Code of Professional Ethics stipulates that teachers are to know the Constitution, but the knowledge underpinning teachers' practices and informing their judgement is not included in this framework. Only the Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher emphasises the relations between attitudes, skills and knowledge.

Professional Teaching Requires Informed Judgement in Context

There are 36 reflexive competences listed in the NSE that elaborate the need for teachers' judgement and pedagogical reasoning, as well as their rationale for teaching choices and reflective practice. The framework uses wording like "make judgements," "defend decisions" and "reflect on." Of these 36 reflexive competences, 14 emphasise teachers thinking about and responding to contextual diversity. This includes awareness of HIV/AIDS, environmental sustainability, and the socioeconomic, religious and cultural diversities that characterise South African society. Ten of the 36 competences focus on the teacher's pedagogical reasoning and planning choices, such as "defending the choice

of learning mediation" (DoE 2000a, 16). Six of them are directed at teachers "reflecting on and assessing [their] own practice" (DoE 2000a, 22). However, the structure of the NSE separates teacher knowledge, reasoning and reflection, and practical action into different sets of competences. This separation effectively obscures the interrelationships between knowledge and the capacity for informed judgement in practice.

The IQMS emphasises the action of teachers without due consideration of the conceptual thinking, judgement and cognitive work that it takes to consistently organise opportunities for learners to engage with knowledge in systematic ways. As non-observable and immeasurable facets of teachers' practice, judgement, reasoning and reflection are not included in IQMS criteria.

In MRTEQ, the importance of conceptually informed judgement is implied by phrases like "use of appropriate methods assessment/resources." The word "appropriate" suggests that there are other (less appropriate) options that an effective teacher does not select for reasons that cannot be clearly articulated and defended. However, the listed competences do not explicitly require beginner teachers to be able to give an account of their planning and teaching decisions.

Professional Teaching Is Associated with Consistently Skilful Performance

The seven Roles of the Educator articulate 50 practical competences that describe various enactments of teachers' performances in the classroom. Nineteen of these concern teachers' responses to contextual challenges. These typically address teachers' awareness of the social problems in society, including the prevalence of violence, drug abuse, poverty, child and women abuse, HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation (DoE 2000a, 19). Six of them cover teachers' language competence, for instance, "using the language of instruction appropriately to explain, describe and discuss key concepts" (2000a, 15), and "writing clearly and convincingly in the language of instruction" (17). Thirteen out of 50 competences relate to pedagogical choices, and the design and use of strategies, while five cover the teachers' competences in assessing learners by, for example, "appropriate use of different assessment practices" (21).

The SACE Code of Professional Ethics (2002) states that an educator should not be "negligent or indolent" in performing his or her duties. However, it does not specify what these professional duties are, aside from stating that teachers should keep parents "adequately and timeously" informed of the well-being and progress of the learners. The Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher, in contrast, describe 10 of the core duties that comprise teachers' daily work. The framework uses wording like "must know how to …" and "must be able to …" These competences include how to teach their subject(s), how to select and determine the sequence and pace of content, how to communicate effectively, how to unpack the specialised content of a curriculum, how to use available resources appropriately, how to teach in a manner that includes all learners, how to identify learning or social problems, as well as how to assess learners in reliable and varied ways. As

already argued, these skills and competences are portrayed as depending integrally on an associated knowledge base. In stark contrast, the IQMS performance expectations contain a list of 38 observable criteria for classroom action. These have been separated from the ethical orientations that underpin the action, and from the knowledge base that potentially provides the grounds for the selection of classroom procedures used in a particular situation for particular purposes.

Professional Teaching Contributes to a Network of Community-Based Working Relationships

All four frameworks include criteria about teachers working in professional relationships with others. One of the roles defined in the NSE is the Community, Citizenship and Pastoral Role. It requires that teachers build supportive and empowering relationships with learners, parents and fellow educators, as well as with their community. The SACE Code of Professional Ethics places the teachers' claim to professionalism very strongly in work-based relationships and in their conduct as individual educators who act within a collective. The code elaborates extensively on acceptable and unacceptable conduct within these relationships. Teachers are expected to respect the dignity of others, refrain from harming or undermining others, and exhibit "appropriate behaviour and language" in ways that elicit respect (SACE 2002). The SACE Code of Professional Ethics has as a criterion that educators have an obligation, in particular, to support the induction of newcomers to the profession. This requirement is not reflected in the Competences of Beginner Teachers. Beginner teachers, however, are expected to engage in reflective practice "in conjunction with their professional community of colleagues in order to constantly improve and adapt to evolving circumstances" (DHET 2015, 62). In addition, they are expected to be able to work with other role players to support the learning and well-being of the learners they teach. Similarly, the IQMS requires that teachers form "appropriate interpersonal relationships" with learners, parents and their colleagues.

Professional Teachers Strive for Personal Growth and Development

All four frameworks stress the importance of educators extending their learning and participating in further development opportunities. These are mostly presented as an end in themselves, with little explanation of why this is necessary for further professionalism. In the Roles of the Educator (DoE 2000a), for example, the teacher is expected to be a "Scholar and Researcher [who engages in] lifelong learning." The SACE Code of Professional Ethics (2002) requires that teachers "keep abreast of educational trends and developments." In the IQMS, learning and willingness to participate in development activities are emphasised, while the Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher maintains that reflecting on his/her own practice leads to improvement of the teacher's work. These convey the importance of keeping abreast of developments and also convey a sense of striving for increasing excellence in their teaching practices. None of the frameworks, though, express the importance of continuous professional development informed by research to advance evidence-based practice.

Implications for Current Reforms

If the professional teaching standards are to establish conditions of possibility for systemic improvement, there are several lessons to be learnt from the successes and limitations of the four policies analysed in this paper.

Firstly, the professional teaching standards need to replace some of these existing frameworks, and not be yet another layer of policy on top of what exists. This paper has shown that there are significant structural and conceptual limitations within the four policy frameworks currently in place. Another layer of policy is likely to be ignored or resented as yet another attempt to regulate and control rather than support and empower teachers in the work they do. A set of professional teaching standards will be owned by SACE and gazetted. They are likely to be meaningful if they are used to inform the development and endorsement of pre-service and continuous professional development programmes for teachers. Professional teaching standards are also useful as a starting point for promoting internal regulation through peer discussions, debates and accountability to peers within the practice. Used in these ways, the professional teaching standards create possibilities for promoting and enhancing teacher professionalism through prompting mentoring, reflection and communal learning.

Secondly, it is important to note that three of the four frameworks analysed are attempts to enhance the professionalism of teaching driven by regulation from the state. For three of these frameworks the state assumes the role of the authority and regulator of teaching. The authority and expertise of teaching is therefore portrayed as residing outside those within the practice itself. These policies stipulate to teachers the nature of their work and the grounds upon which expertise and competence are recognised and remunerated. Even the SACE Code of Professional Ethics focuses on the external behaviour and actions of teachers without emphasising the ethical orientations, knowledge and judgements that make a skilled, coherent practice. Such frameworks ultimately restrict the professionalism of teaching. The analysis in this paper shows how various policy frameworks have presented aspects of teachers' work in disjointed, atomistic ways. Collectively, the policies recognise the parts of professional teaching practices, but do not give easy access to the coherence between the parts required for a whole. In other words, the policy documents that teachers are expected to draw on present their work as fragmented, without a coherent organising principle. They are conceptually incoherent because they do not incorporate the body of knowledge that is derived from a combination of theory and empirical evidence, which then guides the practice of professional teachers.

For the new set of professional teaching standards to be credible and have traction for enhancing professionalism, they need to be owned and accepted by practising teachers across a wide range of contexts, and by a wide range of other stakeholders in the education system. Evans (2011) cautions that true professionalism cannot be imposed on teachers (by the state through legislation) nor demanded from teachers (from a council). Teacher professionalism, she (2011, 855) argues, is embodied in

> what teachers do, how and why they do it; what they know and understand; where and how they acquire their knowledge and understanding; what attitudes they hold; what codes of behaviour they follow; what their function is; what purposes they perform; what quality of service they provide; and the level of consistency incorporated into the above.

Previous South African frameworks have been directed through state-led legislation and policies, as if expertise in teaching rests entirely with policy makers. Professional teaching standards have little chance of enhancing professionalism unless they have input from those who have intimate knowledge of the theoretical and empirical research base that informs practices in the field. The protocols of practice should therefore emerge from a collaborative process that includes teachers, teacher educators, academics, unions, governmental officials and the professional council. These standards should not be used as a mechanism for externally controlled teacher accountability. Extensive consultation with stakeholders is required to reflect a set of standards that is both conceptually informed, contextually appropriate, and accepted by stakeholders. The professionalism project will be advanced if the set of professional teaching standards is used to develop teacher education initiatives, and by school leadership to promote self and peer reflection, and discussion about effective teaching practices.

Thirdly, a focus of professional teaching standards on bare minimum expectations is likely to reinforce a conception of teachers as skilled workers whose work is routine. This would restrict innovation and exemplary practice rather than encouraging it. To act as a potential lever for systemic change, the professional teaching standards need to articulate a vision for what could be, rather than reflect the bare basics of what teachers are required to do. The best of South Africa's teachers, across a wide range of schooling contexts, need to see exemplary practices that they aspire to reflected in the document. It needs to avoid the presentation of a list of disconnected skills. Equally important, it needs to have conceptual coherence organised around what it is that teachers need to know and do in order to effectively enable learning. To state that teachers have many roles is to reduce teaching to its parts and obscure its grounds for consolidation as a practice. The standards need to focus on the primary role of professional teaching: the capacity of teachers to organise systematic learning opportunities for those they teach. It is thus necessary to consider where in the schooling cycle (Taylor et. al. 2017) the envisaged professional teaching standards can best be used as a lever for the professional development of teachers.

Fourthly, consideration needs to be given to how the professional teaching standards will be used. If they are used to focus teachers' discussions, reflections and debates around what is enabling and constraining their core work of enabling learning, then there is the potential to support teacher professionalism. The standards may offer a useful framework for awarding SACE endorsement to pre-service and/or continuing teacher development initiatives. Any attempt for the professional teaching standards to be used for the further performance management of individual teachers would be misdirected, as this would again minimise the importance of the less visible aspects of teachers' work. The standards

may potentially be a powerful means for the profession to resist increasing impositions of bureaucratic control that detract from teachers' core work.

Conclusion

A conception of teaching as a professional practice includes aspects of competent classroom performance, but also transcends a focus on the observable aspects of teaching. Professional teaching has components that cannot be observed nor measured. These include an ethical orientation and commitment to the well-being of learners that underpin moral teaching action and the nature of relationships teachers form through their work. In addition, professional teaching is founded on knowledge that informs teachers' pedagogical reasoning and the judgements they make on a daily basis. If the set of professional teaching standards is to support the professionalism of teaching in the South African context, it's important for stakeholders to understand how previous policy frameworks both advanced and constrained teacher professionalism. The analysis presented here shows how certain dimensions of teacher professionalism (especially skills, collaboration and continuous learning) have been well represented in previous frameworks. However, less visible dimensions of professional teaching were largely ignored. Where the less visible aspects of teaching were included in policy frameworks, the visible and invisible dimensions of teachers' work were too often separated, as if these work in isolation from one another. A set of professional teaching standards will support teacher professionalism if it enables stakeholders to distinguish the structures and conditions in the education system that work against teachers focusing their time, energies and conversations on providing quality lessons. It will also support teacher professionalism if it provides the concepts and language for teachers in communities to examine their own practices critically and reflectively.

Acknowledgements

This work is based on research supported in part by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (Grant Numbers 109224), JET Educational Services and the Zenex Foundation.

Prof. Rusznyak is a forum member of the UNESCO Chair in Teacher Diversity and Development and Dr Kimathi postdoctoral researcher sponsored by the project.

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