

Identifying Teacher Professional Development Based On Teacher Standards Rubrics

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Abstract

The professional standards for the teachers were developed for the first time in Azerbaijan in 2014-2015 and validated in 2015-2016 in the framework of Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan Republic and World Bank Project.

The rubrics related to each sub-standards provide opportunities for teachers to assess the level of their professional development according to four levels: less experienced, experienced, professional and leader. Using rubrics the teachers could identify the key areas for evaluating their experience throughout the career stages and receiving feedback from colleagues.

Our study showed that the developed rubrics can be used both for assessing the teacher's professional level and for self-evaluation in order to identify the professional development needs, clarify the most important areas where the teacher could be supported by school leadership or government.

Identifying the mechanism for using the results of rubrics-based professional assessment and self-evaluation for the forecasting and planning the professional development of teachers has the particular importance.

- Individual level. Allow the teacher to reflect and authentically evaluate their own competencies, determine the tasks and ways of their professional development.
- School level. The areas of professional development needs for each teacher or group of teachers determine. The analysis of assessment data will help to identify the causes of existing problems in the teaching and to determine the necessary courses or other ways of improving the level of professional competence of teacher.
- Countrywide level. Serve as an excellent tool for analyzing the state of teachers professional development across the country and identifying the areas that require additional state support (strengthening the pre-service and in-service training in this direction).

Key words: Teacher Standards (TS), Teacher Standards rubrics, teacher needs assessment, forecasting and planning

Background of Teacher Standards development for Azerbaijan education system

The professional standards for the teachers were developed for the first time in Azerbaijan in 2014-2015 and validated in 2015-2016 in the framework of Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan Republic and World Bank Project.

In total 2 versions of General Professional Standards were developed:

- a. Teachers' **Perspective** Professional Standards (9 standards)
- b. **Minimal** Teacher Standards (5 standards)

The Subject-oriented Teacher Standards (for Math and Mother Tongue) were also developed.

The main emphasis in the development of the new Teacher Standards is focused on the gradual implementation of the Professional Certification System for current secondary school teachers in Azerbaijan.

Developed **Teacher Perspective Standards** are aimed to the highest professional requirements and are intended to provide them with the necessary guidance to enhance the professionalism of teachers. These standards will serve to provide promising ways to establish and implement a Teacher Professional Development System in Azerbaijan, and to act as a catalyst for the development of teachers in Azerbaijan.

The Minimal Teacher Standards will provide criteria for step-by-step assessment and improving of the teaching staff skills based on Teacher Professional Development In-service Program along with graduate program for newly coming teachers.

Math and Mother Tongue Standards cover the general pedagogical skills of the teacher, including the requirements for special knowledge, abilities and skills based on math and native language.

The developed general and subject-oriented professional standards for secondary school teachers were statistically verified in 2015-2016 on 1600 teachers in the five districts of Azerbaijan (Baku city, Absheron, Ganja, Yevlakh and Ismayilli). Based on statistical results and validation the Teacher Standards were revised and finalized.

What we relied on when developing standards

- Gathered informed from research and by existing leadership standards and frameworks;
- Examples of teacher standards in other countries;
- Consulted stakeholders from all school sectors, institutes and professional associations;
- Analyses the feedback on draft TS from stakeholders.

The aim and characteristics of developed Teacher Standards

The professional standards for the teachers are a framework document that defines the basic requirements for the teachers' qualifications. The Teacher Standards aim to:

- provide a common approach, a reference point, necessary for the description, assessment and planning of the complex and diverse teachers' work;

- describe what teachers need to know, understand and be able to do,
- indicate the areas of activity to improve the quality of teacher training and qualifications,
- provide a conceptual framework that teachers can use for self-evaluation and to discuss professional needs and tasks with their peers to improve their skills,
- formulate a relationship between the quality of teaching practice and student achievements; and usage of it for forecasting the education progress.

All the standards are underpinned by the key outcomes for children identified in New Curriculum.

The structure of TS

In accordance with the modern education strategy the TS framework is based on **competence approach**. Teachers are expected to **know, understand and do**. Their **values, attitudes and behavior** have the critical role in providing the quality of education. It is represented as an competence-based integrated model of professional standards and covers the main areas of activity of a teacher:

I. KNOWLEDGE STANDARDS

Area 1. Student development and learning characteristics

Area 2. Subject knowledge and their efficient application

II. TEACHING EXPERIENCE STANDARDS

Area 3. Teaching planning and learning strategies (methodology)

Area 4. Assessment of student achievements

Area 5. Using of information and communication technologies and other technical equipment in professional activities

Area 6. Creating a learning environment and classroom management

Area 7. Communication strategies and tools

III. EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Area 8. Cooperation

Area 9. Professional development

Each standard and sub-standard combines three basic components of competence:

- **Professional attitudes (values), behavior (personal qualities),**
- **Professional knowledge,**
- **Professional skills.**

Therefore, all standards are described in the context of improving the quality of teaching, both by directly emphasizing the quality of teaching practice, and indirectly, focusing on the attitudes/behavior, knowledge and skills of the teachers.

Each standard was developed includes 5-9 **sub-standards** in each (a total of 55 sub-standards in Perspective TS). These sub-standards set out clearly and more detailed the key areas and important features of teacher practice. Sub-standards are expressed in measurable, laconic form.

The new standards are applying to the majority of teachers regardless of their career stage and provide clarity of the expectations at each stage.

TS rubrics

The framework of standards is progressive and reflects the expected progression of teachers (their professional attitudes/behaviour, knowledge, understanding and skills) defines the characteristics of teachers at each career stage.

The **rubrics** developed for the each sub-standard describe the professional features for 4 categories of the teachers and reflect the following level of professional development:

- I. Less experienced teacher
- II. Experienced teacher
- III. Professional
- IV. Leader

The rubrics demonstrate how the teachers could increase the professional effectiveness during their career.

The role of Teacher Standards

In the strategic perspective the Teacher Standards is a tool for:

- implementing an education strategy in a changing world;
- improving the quality of education and the national level of international education;
- objective measuring of teacher qualifications;
- selecting teachers in educational institutions.

For the teachers the developed Teacher Standards:

- describe professional practice in a common language;
- make explicit the role of quality teaching and school leadership in raising standards for the 21st century.

The Standards are an important tool also for education improvement, because they:

- set and maintain standards for excellence in teaching and school leadership,
- lead and influence excellence in teaching and school leadership,
- provide a framework for professional learning,
- attract, develop and support teachers,
- guide self-improvement and assessment,

- highlight the role of teacher to the wider community.

Rubrics based self-evaluation and effective teaching

Teacher Standards framework provides clear guidelines for identifying and describing effective teaching. As was mentioned earlier the rubrics related to each sub-standards were also developed. The rubrics provide opportunities for teachers to assess the level of their professional development according to four levels: less experienced, experienced, professional and leader.

Appropriate self-evaluation, reflection and professional development activity is critical for improving teachers' practice at all career stages. As was mentioned above TS could be important for self-evaluation and identifying professional needs and self-improvement directions.

Using TS a teacher should be able:

- to assess own teaching practice,
- receive feedback from colleagues,
- identify own professional needs.

Through these Teacher Standards rubrics, teachers could identify the key areas for evaluating their experience throughout the career stages.

Rubrics based assessment and forecasting

Our study showed that the developed rubrics could be used both for assessing the teacher's professional level and for self-evaluation in order to identify their professional development needs. It is also useful for clarifying the most important areas where the teacher could be supported by colleagues, school leadership or government.

Identifying the mechanism for using the results of rubrics-based professional assessment and self-evaluation for the forecasting and planning the professional development of teachers has the particular importance.

- **On the individual level.** Teacher standards rubrics allow the teacher to reflect and authentically evaluate their own competencies, determine the tasks and ways of their professional development. In our practice, on the basis of self-assessment conducted, teachers developed an individual plan for professional development.
- **At the school level.** For realizing the teacher assessment by the school leadership the areas of professional development needs for each specific teacher or group of teachers should be determined. In this case, the analysis of assessment data will help to identify the causes of existing problems in the teaching of a given teacher or group of teachers, as well as to determine the necessary courses or other ways of improving teacher's level of professional competence.
- **On the countrywide level.** The teacher standards can also serve as an excellent tool for analyzing the state of professional development of teachers across the country and identifying the professional needs of teachers based on data of the teachers' lowest level competencies (standards). In this case, the government, on the basis of assessment results, can identify areas of professional development that require additional state support and,

for example, strengthening the pre-service training of teachers in this direction or creating a catalog of courses for in-service training that closely meets these needs.

For example, at the beginning of 2016-2017 academic year TS rubrics based teachers' self-assessment (on the individual level) and assessment of the teachers by subject supervisors (at the school level) were implemented in the Baku European Lyceum. As a result, the teachers prepared the individual Professional Development Plan; and school leadership also developed school-based Teacher Professional Development Program (special training courses, supportive classroom observation and so on). During the implementation of the proposed activities most of the teachers have mentioned the progress in teaching and improving of the professional attitudes.

Identifying teacher professional development based on teacher standards rubrics will grow the competences of teachers which meet the standards, and thus the teachers' role in education will increase.

Recommendations

1. The Teacher Standards should be seen as a tool that helps teachers identify areas of strength and weaknesses in order to clarify the areas for further professional development.
2. It is advisable to use the Teachers' Professional Standards to determine the professional needs of teachers. By learning the professional needs of a teacher, it becomes possible to select and implement appropriate and more effective models, course content, and resources to enhance the professional level of the teacher.
3. Assessment and motivation of educated, creative, talented teachers working in the education system will create motivation for teachers' professional development and enhance the status of the teaching profession.
4. The application of teacher standards will help stimulate teachers in their professional activities and will create new opportunities for improving the quality of education and providing support for all students to improve their academic performance.
5. The professional standard of the teacher can be applied:
 - a) when applying for a job in a general educational institution for the position of "teacher";
 - b) during certification of teachers of educational institutions.