



NALDIC Response to the TDA Consultation on the draft standards for classroom teachers

NALDIC believes that whilst it is essential that any standards help teachers to plan their careers, the primary purpose of teaching standards should be to improve practice for the benefit of learners. Of particular concern to the Association is how well such standards will ensure that teachers are increasingly able to meet the distinctive needs of bilingual learners and those learning English as an additional language in our schools.

NALDIC appreciates that the draft standards seek to eschew detail, however we are very surprised that they do not make explicit reference to teaching issues associated with social, ethnic and linguistic diversity. For the profoundly important idea expressed in Q2.7, namely for teachers to *'take active and practical account of the principles of equality, inclusion and diversity in their teaching'* to have any practical value at all, it would be necessary to explicitly mention the significant presence of bilingual pupils in our schools, many of whom are in the process of learning English as an Additional Language.

NALDIC believes that the current draft standards are too general to help teachers identify their professional development needs in relation to bilingual learners and those learning English as an additional language in our schools. Evidence gathered by the Association over the previous 15 years has indicated that even with the reasonably explicit nature of the 2002 QTS standards, teachers at a variety of points in their careers have difficulty in identifying their professional development needs in relation to EAL and bilingual learners. Whilst both the current and draft standards have important implications if they are interpreted in the light of the learning situation of EAL learners, the lack of a statutory framework for professional development and progression relating to EAL learners has meant that few teachers have been able to identify their needs effectively. The current draft standards will not be helpful in this regard.

For example, the standard for QTS (Q2.5) contains *'understand how the progress and well being of learners are affected by a range of influences and use this knowledge to inform their teaching and to support learners effectively'*. Being bilingual and acquiring English as an additional language are very major influences on the progress and well being of around ten percent of learners in English schools. However this could easily be missed by those unfamiliar with such needs who have not had adequate preparation to recognise this as a major issue. If you contrast the very general nature of Q2.5-A2.5 with the very much more specific and progressive nature of the *'literacy, numeracy and ICT/data analysis'* standard of Q2.6-A2.6, it is obvious that some standards have been through much more detailed refinement and organisation.

For example, the *'inclusion'* standard for QTS (Q2.7) contains *'know and understand the roles of colleagues and other professionals who have specific responsibilities for learners who are gifted and talented or who have other special learning needs'*. We would strongly urge the TDA to, at minimum, consider the explicit inclusion of the phrase *'bilingual learners of English as an additional language'*. Secondly, the *'inclusion'* standard for QTS (Q2.7) contains *'understand their responsibility to make effective provision for all learners and take active practical account of the principles of equality, inclusion and diversity in their teaching'*. Whilst it may be appropriate for teachers at the beginning of their careers to have a notional and possibly abstract *'understanding of their responsibilities'* in relation to equality, inclusion and diversity through

their initial preparation for teaching, this is clearly inadequately challenging for teachers from their induction onwards. We would argue that as England is a pluricultural and plurilingual community, no teacher should be considered to have reached a more experienced level (such as performance threshold or senior teacher) if they cannot demonstrate that they *'can make effective provision for all learners and take active practical account of the principles of equality, inclusion and diversity in their teaching'*. For example, all such teachers should at minimum be able to show that they have sufficient understanding of the process of additional language acquisition to *'make effective provision for the needs of EAL learners at different stages of additional language acquisition within their setting in all subject or curriculum areas'*.

As stated earlier, whilst the standards are coherent, their general nature means that without considerable interpretation and explanation they are insufficiently clear. For example the 'inclusion' standard for QTS (Q2.7) contains *'understand their responsibility to make effective provision for all learners and take active practical account of the principles of equality, inclusion and diversity in their teaching'*. Whilst practitioners with considerable experience of working in linguistically, culturally and socially diverse settings may be able to interpret this standard appropriately, it is not necessarily clear to all practitioners.

It is essential that standards relating to subject knowledge (Q2.1 – A2.1, Q2.2 – A2.2, Q2.3 – A2.3 and Q2.4 – A2.4) are explicitly seen to apply to all subjects and not simply those which currently form part of the National Curriculum. These developmental standards will need to be able to be applied to all teaching and learning situation and not only those which conform to dominant current working conventions, for example, class teachers in the primary phase and NC subject teachers in the secondary phase. If the draft standards are to apply universally, they must also encompass the needs of professionals in 'non-standard settings', for example EAL specialist teachers, community language teachers, specialist teachers of the deaf, professionals working with learners with a range of special educational needs and learning difficulties and disabilities etc. In our field it is essential that the skills of experienced professionals are fully recognised to ensure that expertise is retained within the field for the benefit of bilingual pupils. The current situation is that professionals are leaving the field because the skills they have developed are not fully recognised and rewarded within the current system of career development. So despite the fact that most EAL specialists are highly qualified and experienced, as well as already having a full range of 'general' teaching skills, their expertise is not considered to be on a par with other teaching professionals'. The draft professional standards could help to redress this, providing that their application to all teaching professionals is made explicit.