



The Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta

Teachers' Code of Ethics and Practice

2012

Ministry of Education and Employment

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Acknowledgements

The Teachers' Code of Ethics and Practice is being published following drafting and consultations with various stakeholders.

Thanks are due to the members of the Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta for preparing the original draft and to the Council's staff for the executive support that was provided in the process.

Thanks are also due to various stakeholders, including academics from the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, the Malta Union of Teachers, School Councils and individual educationists who became involved in the consultation process and contributed valuable feedback that was taken into consideration when producing this document.



Message from the Hon. Minister of Education and Employment

Dolores Cristina

Teachers play a pivotal role as front liners in every education system. Their role is not simply that of disseminating knowledge or imparting information.

It goes far beyond as theirs is the role to create a stimulating learning environment to ensure that all students reach their full potential. They are role models within themselves for their students who, consciously or subconsciously, emulate their behaviour. They instil values and mores that will influence the lives of their students. Theirs is the responsibility to understand the needs of their students even outside the school walls and theirs is the responsibility to nurture and to cherish.

Our teachers remain the prime investment in good quality education.

I fully appreciate the professional way in which teachers are implementing the radical reforms our country has embarked upon in recent years. They are adapting to different norms and rising to meet new challenges with an enthusiasm that does them credit. Responding to new social realities and changing lifestyles is no mean feat. Technology is a wonderful gift but it also brings with it a new and steep learning curve for many of us.

The relationship between teachers and students is a very important and sensitive one. It must be built on strong foundations, stemming from mutual respect and trust as well as on the highest of ethical standards. The same may be said of the relationship between teachers and other members of the school community that includes, among others, the administration, other professionals and parents.

It is the passion for teaching and the strong desire to deliver in the best interests of our students which drive teachers to continue to seek continuous professional development. Professional development is the key to professional progression and to the delivery of quality education.

It is with great satisfaction that I present the revised Teachers' Code of Ethics and Practice that reflects new and changing realities in the teaching profession. The majority of teachers already follow the principles set out in this revised code and this exercise formalises what is being practised in the main.

This short message gives me the opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to all those who are giving a sterling contribution in the education sector. Their passion and dedication are invaluable.

My thanks also to the Council for the Teaching profession and to the MUT for their contribution to this Code of Ethics and Practice.



Message from the Permanent Secretary

James Calleja

All professionals are proud to have a Professional Code of Ethics and Practice which is a most important identifying feature of their profession.

This Code of Ethics and Practice was drawn up by educators for educators and contains the commitments that a professional has towards the students/pupils and their parents/guardians/carers as well as to other members of the profession.

The Key Principles contained in the Code define the interactions between each individual educator and students, their parents, the authorities and members of other multi disciplinary teams. The education of the nation's children has been entrusted in our care and this places all of us, whatever our role is, in a very special position of responsibility which requires of us very high standards of behaviour and conduct.

The quality of the service that we as professional educators provide has a direct influence on the Nation and its citizens who, come tomorrow, will be leading the Nation. Therefore, the service we provide should be of the highest possible standard and our conduct should be such that it places the profession in the highest possible esteem.

All of us are aware that our main responsibility is to the student and to the development of his/her full potential. In this respect we need to pursue the truth, devote all our efforts towards excellence, the acquisition of knowledge and the observance of democratic principles. It is our duty to maintain a high level of competence and in order to do this we need to engage in continuous professional development throughout our career in the profession.

Message from the President of the Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta



Adrian Camilleri

The Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta is responsible for regulating the behaviour of all registered teachers in Malta and by means of this new "*Teachers' Code of Ethics and Practice*" the ideals of the profession are clearly stated. The values that are to guide all teachers are emphasised in this code.

This code addresses the relationship that teachers should have with various stakeholders, not least the pupils/students entrusted in their care. Others include colleagues, parents, guardians, education authorities and the general community.

The implementation of this code is of paramount importance to ensure that the profession continues to enjoy the respect that it has acquired over many years of practice. Our ancestors have worked very hard to earn this respect and it is our duty to maintain it at the highest possible level. There have always been and there will continue to be challenges that members of the profession face on a daily basis. I feel confident that with the cooperation of all concerned these challenges will continue to be faced with determination in the best interests of the profession.

Many professionals have been involved in the drawing up of this code of ethics and practice and it is only fair and just that due recognition is given to all those who have contributed in one way or another. Amongst those who have offered their opinions and contributions are Academics from the University of Malta, especially from the Faculty of Education, the Malta Union of Teachers, various School Councils of the Colleges of State Schools and individuals who remain loyal to the profession even though, as is evident in some cases, they

have ended their career in education. Their contributions were very valid and have contributed in no small way to the publication of this code of ethics.

On a personal note, being new to the position of President of the Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta, I would like to thank the Hon. Minister of Education and Employment for giving me the opportunity to serve on the Council, my predecessor, Dr Edward Debono, for leading the Council for a full term and beyond, and all the members of the Council who have worked collegially and assiduously since the Council was first set up in 2008.

Message by the Malta Union of Teachers



Kevin Bonello

The Malta Union of Teachers has been an active contributor in the local education field since its inception in 1919. The dual role of the MUT as a trade union and professional association actualized itself through its proactive forward-looking policies. The Union was instrumental in the formation of today's teaching profession as well as a catalyst for important reforms which have shaped the local educational system.

Suffice to say that the Malta Union of Teachers anticipated the need of – and successfully championed the case for the legal recognition of teaching as a profession, the setting up of a Teaching Council, inclusive education and parents' right to freedom of choice in schooling. It was thus natural for the MUT to participate in the exercise leading to the reformulation of the Teachers' Code of Ethics. The MUT is fully confident that the vast majority of teachers already subscribe to the principles and values therein enunciated and thus the Code will serve simply as a pro-memoria and updated guide to professional practice. Last but certainly not least, the MUT wishes to thank all teachers for their sterling work in the education and formation of their students.





Introduction

The Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta is the regulatory body established by the Education Act (Cap. 327) of the Laws of Malta for the teaching profession in Malta. It strives to raise the status of teaching by maintaining and promoting the highest standards of professional practice and conduct in the interests of teachers, learners/students, parents and the community. It seeks to keep under review and assess education and training standards of teachers. It also has the power to monitor the fitness of each person in practicing the teaching profession.

The Council has legal powers to investigate and hear cases of alleged unacceptable professional conduct, serious professional incompetence and criminal offences involving teachers.

The Code of Ethics and Practice for Teachers - Purpose, Scope and Status

The Code sets out the key principles of good conduct and practice for teachers in Malta and Gozo. It is intended to guide teachers' practice judgements and decisions and inform parents, and the community of these standards. It also informs members of the community of the standards expected of teachers. It is not, however, a definitive or exhaustive guide. Neither should it be read as a blueprint to be followed unreflectively by teachers. As professionals, teachers are to constantly engage with the principles outlined in a critical manner, taking into account the educational value of the particular relationships with persons within particular teaching and learning situations and processes.

The Code is intended to encourage teachers to adopt an informed approach to their teaching and its contexts and to reflect on the good and correct practices as professional teachers. A teacher shall endeavour to be a role model and shall act within the community in a manner which enhances the prestige of the profession.





The six key principles

KEY PRINCIPLE ONE

Maintain trust in the profession



Members of the Teaching Profession shall:

Base their relationship with students on mutual trust and respect;

Have regard to the safety and wellbeing of students under their responsibility;

Respect the uniqueness and diversity of the learning community they are part of;

Work in a collaborative manner with colleagues and other professionals;

Develop and maintain good relationships with parents, guardians and carers;

Act with honesty, integrity and fairness;

Be sensitive to the need for confidentiality where appropriate;

Take responsibility for maintaining the quality of their professional practice;

Uphold public trust and confidence in the teaching profession; and

Create learning experiences which engage, motivate and challenge students in an inclusive setting with a lifelong learning perspective.

KEY PRINCIPLE TWO

Maintain Professional Relationships with Students

Members of the Teaching Profession shall:

Maintain professional boundaries whilst in school and out of school, avoid improper physical contact, avoid inappropriate communication via any form of media and avoid inappropriate relationships with students. The members of the teaching profession are duty bound and are ultimately responsible to maintain a professional distance;

Refrain from taking advantage of professional relationships with students for their own personal benefit, including by giving private lessons to students from the classes they teach or who are under their administrative responsibility, against payment, whether monetary or in kind;

Conduct pastoral interventions with students professionally, and behave in keeping with their unique position of trust and status as role models;

Follow behaviour management and safe schools policies and guidelines as directed by the relevant school, college and education authorities;

Act appropriately towards students exercising care in their language, gestures and attitudes, ensuring that they do not act in such a manner that is embarrassing or disparaging and ensuring that they do not use abusive language or offensive names or make inappropriate remarks; and

Act with a professional attitude and behaviour at all times.

KEY PRINCIPLE THREE

Respect the Uniqueness and Diversity of Students

Members of the Teaching Profession shall:

Demonstrate respect for diversity, maintain fairness and promote equality irrespective of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, age, language or different needs or abilities;

Maintain an up to date knowledge and understanding of, implement and comply with, current child protection procedures;

Maintain an up to date knowledge of guidelines issued nationally, by the Council for the Teaching Profession, their school or college, education authorities and the Office of the Commissioner for Children insofar as these concern their personal and professional conduct;

Contribute to the creation of a fair and inclusive school environment by addressing discrimination, stereotyping and bullying; and

Identify and refer to the competent authorities any issues that might impact on students' welfare at the earliest possible stage.

KEY PRINCIPLE FOUR

Work in a Collaborative Manner with Colleagues, Parents, Guardians and Carers

Members of the Teaching Profession shall:

Work in a collegiate and cooperative manner with colleagues and other professionals who work in multidisciplinary teams officially recognised by the education authorities;

Respect, support and collaborate with colleagues both in matters concerning the education of students as well as in maintaining relations with colleagues in the highest standards of professional courtesy;

Be prepared to help junior colleagues and those in training and induction in all possible ways;

Respect the authority of senior professional colleagues while retaining the right to express professional opinion and dissent;

Not reprimand, censure, rebuke or criticise any colleague, or any other member of the teaching profession, in the presence of students or in public;

Refrain from making public statements which bring the profession into disrepute;

Develop and maintain good relationships between home and school, respecting the role that parents, guardians and carers have in students' education;

Engage and work positively with parents, as far as possible, in an open and respectful way;

Ensure that their communications with parents, students and colleagues comply with those policies and procedures issued at school or college level, as well as those educational policies and procedures issued at national level;

Demonstrate respect for diversity when dealing with colleagues, parents, guardians or carers in their capacity as partners in the educative process; and

Make every effort to encourage parents, guardians and carers to interest themselves actively in the education and welfare of children in their care.

KEY PRINCIPLE FIVE

Act with Honesty and Integrity

Members of the Teaching Profession shall:

Comply with policies and procedures issued at school, college or national education level, regarding to the use of property, facilities, finances and ICT in their educational setting;

Conduct assessment- and examination-related tasks with integrity and in compliance with official regulations and procedures;

Represent themselves, their experience, professional position and qualifications honestly;

Only disclose confidential information within the parameters allowed by legislation;

Be mindful of their position as a role model to students; and

Both in their personal and professional life, be mindful of their behaviour and attitude, being that these may have an impact on the profession they represent.

KEY PRINCIPLE SIX

Keep their Professional Knowledge and Practice Up To Date

Members of the Teaching Profession shall:

Maintain high standards of practice in relation to teaching and learning, classroom management, planning, monitoring, assessment and reporting;

Keep their professional knowledge and skills updated throughout their teaching career;

Keep updated their knowledge of relevant guidelines and educational developments in their teaching post and role and in relation to teaching in general;

Reflect upon and evaluate their practice as part of their continuing professional development;

Be open and respond positively to constructive feedback regarding their teaching practices; and

Seek support, advice and guidance where necessary.

“Those who know, do.
Those that understand, teach.”

ARISTOTLE



Glossary of Terms

The Code

"The Code" means the Teachers' Code of Ethics and Practice;

The Council

"The Council" means the Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta established by article 26 of the Education Act (Cap. 327);

Media

"Media" means the social media (including web- and mobile-based technologies) such as social networks and blogs; digital media including e-mail, internet, text messaging; electronic media and print media;

Parent

"Parent" means the father or the mother and includes any person who has the care and custody, whether legal or actual, of a student;

Role Model

"Role Model" means any person who serves as an example and whose behaviour is emulated by others;

Student

"Student" means learners and students at primary, secondary and further education levels in all educational institutions;

Teacher

"Teacher" means members of the teaching profession in Malta who are granted a warrant to practice the profession in Malta as provided in Part III of the Education Act. The term "Teacher" does not include a Kindergarten or Learning Support Assistant, a teacher in a school teaching a language as a foreign language, or any person who renders a teaching service in cultural, sport and religious sectors, insofar as this teaching is not being imparted as an integral part of compulsory education in terms of the curriculum in a licensed school.

“The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher
demonstrates. The great
teacher inspires.”

WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD