

Core principles for educational development and improvement professionals



Third edition

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Introduction

The first *Core Principles for Education Improvement Professionals* were published in 2004 by the NAEIAC, predecessor of Aspect union, which has since become a group within Prospect. They created a platform to:

- inform activities/actions/approaches
- validate quality of service through principled benchmarks as a basis for action
- underpin policy development and inform responses to national policy initiatives
- contribute to a framework for strategic decision-making
- provide a basis for embedding emerging networks, at a time of educational turbulence, by creating a cultural “glue”.

These principles were revised in 2009 to take account of changes in working practices for educational development and improvement professionals (EDIPs). The UK’s various education systems have seen legislation and developments that have altered the landscape in which EDIPs operate. These now place a greater emphasis on multi-disciplinary, multi-agency and locality working to deliver appropriate services to children and young people. Other major educational issues have been progressed, all affecting the work of EDIPs. The importance of safeguarding is now a far more significant concern for all practitioners.

The core principles underpin the Aspect group of Prospect’s *Professional Standards for Educational Development and Improvement Professionals*. These were recently updated, with separate versions for England, Northern Ireland and Scotland – see http://bit.ly/aspect_policies

The connection of the principles to professional practice needs regular reappraisal during EDIPs’ careers, as society and the needs of learners change. The quality and direction of service delivery are influenced by greater awareness of the educational and social values of sustainability; equality and social justice; and recognising rights and responsibilities. Even so, the fundamental requirements of the role demanded of EDIPs remain constant:

- a high level of refined personal skills and qualities to enable EDIPs to exert professional leadership in promoting and influencing educational improvement delivery to all stakeholders

- balances to be found in their individual and collective performance, recognising common values and moral purpose while working collaboratively with stakeholders.

These continue to represent real challenges, which have to be met. The Aspect group retains its belief that core principles should underpin professional standards and practice within this specialist area. These principles have been further refined to ensure they remain closely aligned with current developments in services for children and young people. They also need to be pertinent to the increased globalised nature of the world and the rapid technological changes prevalent now and into the future.

The six principles

Educational development and improvement professionals should:

- 1 Encourage personalised success and enrichment for all learners, promoting positive outcomes for children, young people and families.**
- 2 Advocate all elements of social justice and equality of opportunity.**
- 3 Exert professional leadership through vision, strategy, and initiative.**
- 4 Recognise and build upon interdependence between individuals and professional disciplines and across agencies as well as within and between organisations.**
- 5 Demonstrate a high level of integrity based on a moral purpose and display sound personal behaviour, approaches and relationships.**
- 6 Value professional and systematic holistic approaches to learning and promote self and organisational development.**

The principles’ endorsement provides a moral basis for defining the nature of service delivery and signifies a commitment to the highest professional standards and moral leadership. They offer aspirational professional and organisational practices to underpin individual and collective capacity development.

The six principles in context

- 1 Encourage personalised success and enrichment for all learners, promoting positive outcomes for children, young people and families**

Educational development and improvement professionals should exhibit a visible enthusiasm for effective learning and display a visible enthusiasm for effective learning

and teaching as an entitlement for all learners, reflecting a clear commitment to success for all. High expectations appropriate to each individual should be manifested and approaches that make learning an enjoyable, challenging and stimulating experience within a range of enriched opportunities should be supported.

EDIPs need to set and support high standards, optimising opportunities to maximise their own potential, as well as that of others. They should recognise the central importance of learning, achievement and personal development to individuals of all ages.

Weaknesses in practice have to be identified through clear monitoring, evaluation and review processes and then challenged and addressed constructively with a continuous focus on raising achievement for all.

EDIPs should demonstrate a commitment to engaging learners in global issues and enhancing learning in real-life contexts. Learning should be regarded holistically, facilitating individual learners' capacity to learn, promoting the wellbeing of the whole person and their ability to enjoy high levels of self-esteem and deal with a complex and changing world.

2 Advocate all elements of social justice and equality of opportunity

EDIPs should foster equity, access and entitlement to learning. This means encouraging managements and organisations to make decisions and provide services that promote social justice and equality of opportunity for all learners. Advocating and upholding all aspects of equal opportunities – including age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion and beliefs, sexual orientation and social class – is a key principle. It is important to value:

- all members of the community
- social and cultural diversity
- learner empowerment
- social and educational inclusion
- a commitment to life-long learning
- the concept of care for all individuals
- the entitlement of all to fair and equitable treatment within a supportive culture
- principles and practices of global citizenship.

The particular circumstances of all learners should be taken into account when determining the nature of provision. Personalisation is not just about differentiation; it is also about counteracting individual obstacles to learning, whether cognitive or socio-economic.

Approaches should promote self-development and stimulate reciprocal respect between all individuals. Key aspects of personal behaviour such as compassion and tolerance are reflected through broad-based equal opportunities.

Principles such as human rights, human needs, tolerance and responsibility, defining universal values for individuals and collective progress in a dynamic democratic society should be embodied.

3 Exert professional leadership through vision, strategy and initiative

Educational development and improvement professionals should exert professional leadership in influencing educational processes and delivery. They need to convey a coherent long-term vision and be able to adapt and respond to changing circumstances and new ideas.

Vision, strategy and initiative should initiate research and debate around effective learning and teaching, with balanced judgement in risk-taking as part of promoting “best” developments. Such developments demand that EDIPs foster and maintain a supportive culture, which promotes confidence, minimises blame and supports a persistent and assured approach to the pursuit of improvement.

The prevailing climate seeks creative approaches that recognise multiple learning styles within a range of complex interactions. Success is not always assured and it is important to learn from less successful experiences as well as those that work well.

Promulgating vision and strategy and promoting initiative require a principled approach. Establishing and maintaining credibility is crucial for organisations, teams and individuals engaged with educational improvement.

A detailed up-to-date knowledge and understanding of key educational developments and issues and contemporary research is demanded, together with the appropriate experience and suitable personal qualities and temperament to carry out the tasks in hand.

Delivery should be underpinned by a transparent shared vision and a set of values presented through a viable operational plan that engages stakeholders effectively and is based on objective analysis.

EDIPs constantly need to reflect on their practice so that their theoretical understanding and self-knowledge impact on learning and teaching. Specifically, professional leadership demands the capacity to hypothesise and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data and other indicators, within specific contexts.

4 Recognise and build upon interdependence between individuals and professional disciplines and across agencies as well as within and between organisations

To meet all individual learners' requirements, holistic support needs to be delivered in multi-disciplinary, multi-agency partnership approaches to providing advocacy for children, young people and families, so championing their needs.

EDIPs need to foster collaborative partnerships with community

partners, including businesses and voluntary organisations, and other professional services, such as health and social services. In so doing they will widen their vision; increase the resources available; give access to new ideas, effective practice and better solutions to problems; tackle barriers to learning and achievement; and build common goals and customs.

Effective collaboration requires joint objectives, trust and mutual respect for each other's priorities, a willingness to share information and expertise, and regular reviews of progress and achievements.

EDIPs should take every opportunity to cultivate collaboration and co-operation across learning communities, recognising the interdependence inherent in learning and teaching.

Working constructively with others and valuing their contribution affords synergy to outcomes. Through identifying and disseminating successful practice, solutions to problems can be found. Capacity building and self-reliance develop from acknowledging the intrinsic interdependence that runs through the education system.

5 Demonstrate a high level of integrity based on a moral purpose and display sound personal behaviour, approaches and relationships

Educational development and improvement professionals, individually and in teams, should demonstrate their leadership through appropriate modes of behaviour based on high ideals through their approach and relationships. Their concern involves both process and outcome; both ends with the intention of making a positive difference for children, young people and families.

Characteristics of personal behaviour in dealing with every person encountered in the workplace demand a high level of reciprocity. The key elements that should permeate working practices are: mutual respect, courtesy, consideration and evenhandedness, openness, honesty, fairness, courage, justice and integrity.

EDIPs should critically examine personal and professional attitudes, values and beliefs in professional practice in order to effect improvement.

Objectivity, impartiality and independence in making and delivering judgements are fundamental features of fair and equitable professional support and need to be overtly displayed in all day-to-day working.

The increasing multi-disciplinary, multi-agency approaches to service delivery are untenable without mutual respect between all professionals and behaviour that reflects understanding of children, young people and families requiring integrated services.

Judgments need to be objective, and formed from validated, unbiased and unprejudiced data and information, in checking

assumptions and understanding and through fair and honest feedback. Consistency, clear communications and active listening add force to sound working practice.

Fairness must be manifest in systems and procedures, which are known to all stakeholders and developed through participative and consultative processes.

Individuals and teams need to enjoy relationships with each other and with client groups based on openness, sincerity, empathy and integrity, together with compassion and tolerance, permeated by a strong moral purpose.

6 Value professional and holistic systematic approaches to learning and promote self and organisational development

Educational development and improvement professionals should engage with all aspects of lifelong professional learning. They should embrace strategies that recognise that all engaged with educational delivery are learners themselves, so encouraging the development of active professional learning communities.

There should be open approaches to educational research, embracing the notion that this is affected by many factors and the importance of incorporating good practice prevalent in other professions.

Thus, the ongoing development of personal and professional potential applies to individuals; individuals within teams; and in the support of others. This includes the need to be mindful of ways to promote all stakeholders' involvement, including families.

Associated requirements include widespread familiarity with and access to available resources for learners, and each individual being actively engaged with their own processes and programmes of learning. EPIPs demonstrate a creative, active and exploratory attitude to educational activity, with an awareness of techniques that stimulate and strengthen individual and community development.

There is growing value placed on developing social, emotional and behavioural skills as a foundation for effective learning for all pupils, with terms such as "emotional literacy", "emotional intelligence" and "social and emotional competence" now in regular use.

Practical applications

Many detailed practical considerations are involved in meeting the principles outlined above. These include:

- avoiding conflicts of interest between different areas of work and inappropriate non-professional connections
- always informing employers/clients of any potential conflicts arising out of work commitments
- work outside normal employment not affecting normal employment adversely, or hindering or conflicting with the

interests of the employer/client or colleagues

- facilities and services only being used with the agreement of the employer/client
- seeking to agree a job description or work definition with the employer/client outlining fixed commitments
- prioritising contracted commitments and seeking alternative arrangements to provide cover where necessary
- having knowledge of statutory obligations
- complying with reasonable rules and requirements of employers and clients.

The issues facing the children's workforce are changing and due cognisance of interrelated matters that affect networks of different professionals is essential.

Conclusion

Defined principles are an essential element of strong service provision, and increasingly feature in contemporary leadership and management ideals. The cultural ethos and effective functioning of organisations of all sizes is integral to credible and acceptable delivery.

In the educational development and improvement field, there are many "customers", whose interests and priorities may conflict. Consequently, clarity of professional principles becomes even more apposite. Within organisations, unambiguous and well-founded principles pertain to both internal and external relationships. Organisations need a fundamental moral purpose in promoting coherent knowledge creation and sharing. The capacity to understand change is also vital to sound delivery.

The Aspect group of Prospect expects EDIPs to hold common ideals regarding the central importance of learning, achievement and personal development in relation to individuals of all ages. Appropriate behaviour is based on a belief that standards and quality in education can, and should, be improved through advice, inspection, challenge, support and professional development. Consistent high professional standards make a positive contribution to better educational practice.

EDIPs have to meet a very high benchmark in terms of principled working practice. This becomes ever more complex with developments in service delivery models. Discernible, independent and autonomous management and provision of all forms of support for education improvement are a prerequisite for protecting integrity. At the same time, delivery is being carried out within genuine collaborative partnerships with stakeholders, despite potentially conflicting pressures.

Indeed, as current educational developments promote individualised learning pathways, sensitive to personal need, delivery must embrace highly collaborative frameworks. Partnerships and institutional mutual support provide the modern basis for service delivery and incorporate accountability as well as provider frameworks.

THE ASPECT GROUP OF PROSPECT CODE OF CONDUCT

STATEMENT OF VALUES

Members of the Aspect group of Prospect share common ideals about the importance of education to individuals of all ages and to society at large. They believe that standards and quality in education can be improved through the intervention of inspection, advice, support and training. They believe that consistently high professional standards among members can make a positive contribution to better educational practice.

PURPOSE OF THE CODE

The union requires its members to accept and abide by its code of practice as a condition of membership. It sets out the standards of personal and professional conduct required for members employed by local authorities and similar organisations, and who are self-employed. It intends to give members clear guidance about how to conduct themselves. It also demonstrates to employers and the public the standards which are expected of members.

Personal conduct

- Members should perform their duties diligently, conscientiously and without favour and at all times have regard to the interests of their employers, professional colleagues, clients and other associates.
- Members must at all times work within the law.
- Members should ensure their private, personal and political and financial interests do not conflict with their professional duties. They should disclose to their employer, or if self-employed to any relevant clients, any direct or indirect interest that might affect or appear to affect decisions made by their employers and clients and in such cases must not influence or appear to influence such decisions.
- The Aspect group of Prospect is committed to the furtherance of equal opportunities. By their words and actions, members should not give support to activities or policies that encourage discrimination against any individual or group.
- Members should not disclose to a third party any confidential or privileged information entrusted to them by their employers or clients.
- Advertising by members should be legal, honest and truthful and must not mislead or cause public offence.
- Members should not allow their professional judgment or conduct to be influenced or compromised by commercial considerations.
- Members should not accept any hospitality or inducements that could influence their professional judgement in favour of the donor.
- Members should not directly or indirectly exert influence or pressure on any person for the purpose of securing work or contracts.
- Self-employed members should have particular regard to the need for adequate professional indemnity insurance to enable them to meet any claims for breach of their professional duty.
- Self-employed members should not act for any client if there is a conflict of interest between their own professional duty or professional interests and the interests of the client. It is the duty of the member before accepting a commission to carry out the necessary checks to ensure that no conflict of interest exists.



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