

## **Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships in Lifelong Learning**

The lifelong learning sector is relatively new and is born out of a governmental commitment to encourage the participation of adults into learning whether as part of a further education course or a work-based training programme (Hitching, 2008). Lifelong learning is to promote inclusion whilst raising the standards of adult education after the current school-leaving age of 16. Lifelong learning refers to learners in sixth form education right through to adults learning in a community-based setting. The variety of learners and the skills and abilities of those learners presents a range of challenges for a teacher entering into the profession and so it is important to understand what these are. It is also important to understand what is expected of a teacher in this environment and what their role is, as well as what their responsibilities are to their students.

The role of a teacher in the lifelong learning sector should be to adhere to the relevant codes of practice and regulatory requirements that surround the profession. Naturally the teacher should be appropriately qualified and have a licence to practice. They should also provide the resources and equipment that is needed to aid their teaching. There is also a set of legislative Acts that surround the profession, which include the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Data Protection Act 2010, the Equality Act 2010, and the Every Child Matters policy which sets out specific outcomes that the teacher and institution should aim to achieve for their students (Treasury, 2003). In terms of lifelong learning, it may seem peculiar to refer to a policy that deals with this children but ECM deals with children up to the age of 18 and as compulsory education currently ends at 16 years of age, there are children who participate in what is now described as lifelong learning whether this be in an apprenticeship scheme or further education college.

In terms of the responsibilities of the teacher in regard to their students, there are a number of requirements that must be met. The teacher should consider the abilities of the learners in their group and provide appropriate lesson plans that will facilitate their learning ([www.bcu.ac.uk](http://www.bcu.ac.uk), 2011). They should understand their learners and form appropriate relationships whilst managing behavioural challenges accordingly. They should be able to identify any additional learning needs faced by the students they are teaching and provide adequate support that will help the learner overcome any barriers to their learning. The teacher must be able to motivate their students to encourage their learning and they should be able to assess their own personal successes as well as learn from their weaknesses (Tummons, 2007).

A teacher must also promote equality. At a national level this might refer to promoting a greater social equality by providing people with the skills to find work and sustain employment, which may provide greater chances for social mobility (Field, 2010). Equality is also an issue that must be addressed in the classroom, however, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to value diversity and promote equality amongst their students. Every Child Matters provides a framework for protecting and supporting young people in education whilst the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001 states that disabled students have the right not to be discriminated against whilst in education ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), 2001). Practically speaking, the teacher must ensure that they create a lesson plan that does not preclude the involvement of children with special educational needs or physical disabilities but fosters their inclusion. Any additional support that is required by those children must be put in place, which may require the support of the Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator and Additional Learning Support. In terms of

valuing diversity, the teacher must adhere to the Equality Act 2010 which protects specific characteristics to include religious denomination, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, gender reassignment and marriage and civil partnership (www.gov.uk, 2010).

In terms of my own role as a trainee teacher, my roles and responsibilities are not very different from those of a qualified teacher. In addition to knowing and understanding the standards for teachers and the codes of practice that are in place, the trainee teacher must promote equality and diversity in the same way that a teacher might whilst undergoing a programme of mentorship to ensure my own effective teaching practices. I must act as a role model and be proactive in the learning of the students and evaluate my own progression (www.lluk.org.uk, n.d.).

My role in identifying the and meeting the needs of learners would involve assessing the learners and devising differentiated learning outcomes depending on the level they have reached and their own abilities. This may mean putting in place additional support or creating an Individual Learning Plan to help the student achieve set goals and participate in their learning (Tummons, 2007). When there are students with a variety of needs in the group it is important to spend more time creating the lesson plan in advance of the lesson so that when planning an activity particular attention is paid to when the lesson should take place and who is involved as well as what their abilities are. If additional support is in place the teacher should liaise with the relevant professionals to ensure they are aware of the lesson plan and can support the student. In terms of learning styles, the teacher should ensure that the activity is planned so that the subject can be taught in a way that will stimulate the students and meets their own needs. This might involve presenting the material in a practical way and also in a visual way, for instance.

When working with learners it is important to be aware of professional boundaries as the boundaries that exist in the teaching profession are specific to the role and relate to the relationship between the teacher and the student. These include the protection and safeguarding of young people so that no money or gifts are exchanged and that they are not subjected to any form of abuse. All data regarding that child should be treated in confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Whilst there are many similarities between the rules that govern professional working in the teaching profession and other professions, the relationship between the teacher and student is one that is specific to teaching and should be borne in mind.

In addition to these boundaries there are also those that exist between the teacher and any other professionals they may be working with. It is important to set out each individual's aims and objectives as well as the remit within which they are working with regard to the learner. This is so that there are no conflicts between the aims of the teacher and any other professional and that the learner remains supported as much as possible.

In order to meet the needs of learners it is important that an initial assessment is carried out and that the level and abilities of the learner are identified. This assessment may reflect the fact that they require additional support for learning difficulties or because they require translation as English is an additional language for the student. In the event that the student may benefit from internal or external support an appropriate referral may be put made (Tummons, 2007). Once

the referral has been made it is up to the relevant department to complete their own assessment and meet with the student.

My responsibilities in relation to other professionals is to embed punctuality, manage behaviour, role model appropriate behaviour and report any behavioural issues or any issues of concern to the teacher (Wallace, 2007). I would work with the other professionals involved to ensure that relevant information is shared and that those responsible for different aspects of a learner's support were aware of any issues that might affect them.

In addition to providing a supportive learning environment the teacher should also provide one that is safe. This might mean that there is access to first aid but also that any student that requires aids to help them access their learning is given the resources they need. This might mean that they are able to access the room, which would require a risk assessment of their needs. It might mean that they must be sat in a specific location in the room because of a visual impairment. Most of this can be assessed prior to the commencement of the course although there will be occasions when additional requirements are realised throughout the course and the teacher must be prepared to respond to these. It is also important that the student is able to feel that they can discuss their concerns in a safe environment and that the teacher will show compassion and understanding. It has been shown that if a teacher is self-reflective, their ability to communicate is enhanced which ultimately fosters a more encouraging and supportive learning environment (Desautels, 2011).

Promoting appropriate behaviour and respect is important in enhancing the classroom environment and ensuring that everyone within it is treated fairly and equally. Poor behaviour makes an uncomfortable learning environment for students and also the teacher which does not support learning. The root of problematic behaviour usually lies in low motivation and so praising and rewarding may avoid these problems (Race, 2007). Identifying the learner's needs and ensuring that they are met will usually keep behavioural issues at bay but role modelling the most appropriate behaviour and pointing out examples of disrespectful or inappropriate behaviour will help manage the problem. It may also be beneficial to lay down some ground rules so that both the learners and the teacher are aware of what is expected.

## References

- Desautels, L., 2011. The Value of a Safe Learning Environment. *School Climate*.
- Field, J., 2010. *Equality in a Time of Change*. Dublin, The Equality Authority.
- Hitching, J., 2008. *Maintaining your Licence to Practice*. s.l.:Learning Matters.
- Race, P., 2007. *The Lecturer's Toolkit: a practical guide to learning, teaching assessment*. 3rd ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Treasury, C. S. t. t., 2003. *Every Child Matters*, s.l.: [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk).
- Tummons, J., 2007. *Becoming a Professional Tutor in the Lifelong Learning Sector*. s.l.:Learning Matters.

Wallace, S., 2007. *Managing Behaviour in the Lifelong Learning Sector*. s.l.:Learning Matters.

www.bcu.ac.uk, 2011. *Professional Standards for Teachers, Tutors and Trainers in the Lifelong Learning Sector*. [Online]

Available at: [www.bcu.ac.uk/ media/.../Professional Standards for Teachers.doc](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/media/.../Professional_Standards_for_Teachers.doc)  
[Accessed 22 June 2012].

www.gov.uk, 2001. *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001*. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2001/10/contents>  
[Accessed 22 06 2012].

www.gov.uk, 2010. *Equality Act 2010*. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>  
[Accessed 22 06 2012].

www.lluk.org.uk, n.d. *Developing & Supporting Effective Teaching Practice in the Lifelong Learning Sector*.  
[Online]

Available at:

<http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/eg:651/datastreams/DOC/content>

[Accessed 22 06 2012].