A Teaching Profession?

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ABSTRACT

The status of teachers in Wales and England has been a matter of perennial interest. It has personal, social and economic implications for all who teach. Obviously there are also major political issues involved as the state, as paymaster, has intervened to an ever-increasing degree in day-to-day activities in schools. The extent of political power over teachers is epitomized in the announced abolition at a stroke of the General Teaching Council in England. The time seems ripe for a more analytical and extended investigation of some of the issues at stake in discussing the status of teachers in wider society.

This article begins by placing the debate in its historical context. This is followed by a discussion in the light of some recent writings of whether teaching is a profession. Finally, there is an extended analysis of whether the issue of teacher professionalism has become arid and irrelevant, obscuring the crucial contemporary issue of teacher independence. The essential features of this independence are highlighted and an irrefutable case made for the maintenance of that independence if society is to entrust teachers with educating future generations.

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Introduction

One of the more disquieting aspects of comment on the announcement in 2010 of the abolition of the General Teaching Council for England (GTC), and implications for the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) in the wake of this decision, was the lack of historical perspective and the consequent aridity of contextual awareness. One polemic (Pollard, 2010) by the author of a biography of David Blunkett – a writer who might have been expected to show some knowledge of context going back a little further than the last decade since Blunkett was a supporter of the General Teaching Councils – is marked by journalistic knockabout with no sense that a serious debate about teacher professionalism, what it is, the way it might be recognized and its present-day relevance, has gone on since the nineteenth century. The author seems to believe that a purpose of the GTC is to 'root out' incompetent teachers, rather than, as in similar professional bodies, to discipline registered teachers who have been found to have fallen foul of its code of conduct. It is very difficult to know what to make of the judgement that 'the GTC was another idea that was fine in theory, as an attempt to inculcate a greater sense of professionalism, but a waste of time and money in practice, as no more than a talking shop' (Pollard, 2010: 27). Presumably the author would wish to extend the same sentiments to the GTCW. What the generalization does prompt, though not explore, is a debate as to wherein the elements of professionalism lie if, indeed, the concept has much meaning or relevance today.

Historical Context – The Teaching Profession

The matter has a long history, and it is arrogant of present-day policy makers to have no recourse to arguments which have raged for so many decades. It is not possible to investigate this whole history. But it is incumbent on us to see the place of teachers in the professional hierarchy in some perspective. This perspective must encompass all four nations of the British Isles but the histories of education in England and Wales – and therefore of teacher status – are particularly entwined. Some of the particulars which follow relate specifically to Wales but the generalities normally apply across the board. While it is true that devolution of education policy under the umbrella of Westminster Acts of Parliament did accelerate during the twentieth century, it was not until after the inauguration of a Welsh

Assembly in 1999 that Wales became responsible for all aspects of its school education system. Even now, teachers' pay and conditions are not devolved matters.

Broadly speaking, before the nineteenth century the state regarded the education of its citizens as a matter of private enterprise – generally endowed by philanthropic endeavour. Even by the late eighteenth century the most successful programme for the education of the majority in Wales was Griffith Jones's initiative of circulating schools which taught the rudiments of reading to as many as half of the population – children and adults. These itinerant schools were funded by private donations. From 1833 the state began a modest financial injection into the education system, although it did its best to distance itself by channelling these funds only through the national and British societies. However, once these grants were made the state had a responsibility to determine the effectiveness with which its money was being used. To this end the state inspection system, in the shape of Her Majesty's inspectors, was established, with the first inspections being carried out in Wales in the 1830s. By 1839 a government body, a Committee of Privy Council on Education, was in existence and in retrospect an inexorable expansion of the state's role in education was under way.

In 1846 the Committee of Privy Council on Education appointed commissioners to carry out an unparalleled education census in Wales which resulted in a report usually abbreviated to the Blue Books of 1847. The political and cultural fallout of what became known as the 'Treason of the Blue Books' ('Brad y Llyfrau Gleision') need not concern us here. What is significant is comment on the standards of teaching resulting from a system still largely based on private enterprise. It may be summed up by one of the commissioners, J. C. Symons:

> if the competency of the Welsh school master is to be measured by the standard of the popular estimation of his duties, perhaps almost as many exceed as fall short of it. But if it is not an undue expectation that a schoolmaster who professes to teach English should do more than make his scholars pronounce and spell English words without understanding their meaning – that he should give them some degree of mental exercise – inform their minds of the subjects he professes to teach – if these be not extravagant requirements I have no hesitation in saying that there are very few persons worthy of the title of school master in my district. (Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales, 1847: p. 25.)

It is obvious that the potential status of the teacher in circumstances like this – and the physical surroundings in which the majority of them taught

– was of the lowest. Teachers in Wales in 1847 were paid a pittance – a puddler in an ironworks could earn more in a week than a teacher could earn in a month. The menial status of teachers was confirmed under the system of payment by results inaugurated in 1862. While this signalled another increase in state funding it was administered in demeaning fashion by an interrogation of pupils by visiting inspectors. Only if pupil performance and attendance were satisfactory were teachers paid. Even after the 1870 Education Act and, later, the compulsory attendance of children at elementary school, the pupil-teacher system (essentially an apprenticeship model) ran in parallel to the training colleges well into the twentieth century and contributed to the relatively lower status of elementary school teachers.

A further feature of teacher status becomes more obvious with the opening of the Welsh Intermediate schools from 1896, the elite schools which would evolve into the state grammar schools of the post-1944 period. A two-tier system had always existed in that those who taught in public (private) schools enjoyed a far higher status than those in elementary schools. In Wales there were few such schools and they were largely impoverished by the end of the nineteenth century. The demand for secondary education was met by the Welsh Intermediate schools funded by the state. Generally, these schools were staffed by graduates of the universities whose social status was commensurate. Although not affluent in Wales, they were considerably better paid than elementary schoolteachers.

Payment and status do not, of course, always go hand in hand – ministers of religion are perhaps the best example in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Wales. However, where state funding is concerned there is some correlation. Similarly, the training of teachers had an effect on status, particularly as the pupil-teacher system was superseded by training college courses. The development of training, first in training colleges then in the universities towards the end of the nineteenth century, was highly significant in that association with universities (to which the training colleges became increasingly closely linked in the twentieth century) has been deemed a crucial element in aspiration to professionalism (see, for example, Wilensky, 1964: 144–6).

Increasingly in the first half of the twentieth century both elementary schoolteachers – particularly headteachers – and certainly secondary school teachers enjoyed a relatively high status in a Welsh society still characterized largely by primary industries and, in the 1920s and 1930s, dole queues. The inauguration of the Burnham Committees to determine teachers' pay

helped, but it was the recognition of the role of teachers in facilitating social mobility, higher social status and better pay and conditions for their pupils that underlay this respect. Teachers, particularly in county/grammar schools in Wales, were among the elite.

Historical Context – A Professional Body for Teachers

The concept of professionalism as a recognition of status is slippery – tied up with structures within professions, comparisons with other occupations, concepts of mission and service, training and pay leading to social exclusiveness. Recognition of exclusiveness has always been one element within the ambition of every profession. It was accorded to doctors and lawyers – both jealously and ruthlessly exclusive occupations – in the nineteenth century by means of the General Medical Council and the Law Society.

Such bodies were not the 'be all and end all' of status but they were – and are – regarded as highly significant elements within it. Teachers have always wanted such recognition, certainly since the middle of the nineteenth century, although the waters muddy in the search. Since the time when 'the College of Preceptors first made a proposal for a "scholastic council" in 1862' (Sayer, 2000: 20) there have been recurrent attempts to devise a suitable system for the registration of teachers. Particularly germane to the present debate is this conundrum of what on the surface would appear to be the simple task of listing those people whose training qualifications allow them to teach. All attempts tended to founder on the complex relationships between state and teachers, as well as the perception of teachers' unions that governments might be using such a registration body to undermine their own position. Nor could the role of the local authorities be ignored, particularly in their heyday after the Second World War.

Certain elements in the debate become evident as the saga of registration evolved in the twentieth century. First, recognition of teachers and consequent status have always been in the gift of the state. Arguably since 1833 – when, as we have seen, the first grant of state money was given to the voluntary societies, certainly from 1870, when the state enabled school boards to establish schools with public money – the state has been intimately involved in the approval of education structures, including that of teacher training and qualification. Paradoxically, any independence granted to the

profession must be through legislation by central government. The corollary would seem to be that teachers are civil servants, but in the British tradition, unlike the French, this has never been the case. Fortunately, when Westminster governments have thought along these lines they have gone no further. The implications of such overt political control of the education system have been eschewed, although in practice the dramatically accelerated involvement of the state since 1988 would indicate that true independence is ultimately minimal.

It is usually forgotten that general teaching councils have their predecessors. A Teachers' Registration Council, established under the Board of Education Act in 1901, lasted only until 1906. In 1912 another Teachers' Registration Council was established, later to become the Royal Society of Teachers, although membership was not compulsory. After the Second World War, the debate about professional recognition for teachers by means of a teaching council proved of low priority to successive secretaries of state. The establishment of the General Teaching Council for Scotland in 1966 did prompt a reaction in England and Wales. A government working party was established in 1968 and the traditional fissures between the most powerful interest groups immediately emerged. They resonate today. While ostensibly they were – and are – about practicalities of control they have major implications for the concept of professionalism in teaching. In this working party it became obvious that the civil servants in the Department for Education and Science were not prepared to yield control lightly. It was equally obvious within the range of interests represented on the working party that the issue was fraught with problems. The teachers' unions, teacher trainers and local educational authorities – all much more powerful then than now – had their own often differing views. The teacher unions, in particular, were often at each other's throats. The profession certainly did not speak with one voice and therefore diluted its own potential influence. Again what is significant is that this was not a discussion about the recognition of professionalism. It was purely and simply a power struggle.

The campaign for a general teaching council continued in different phases through the 1980s and 1990s. Thanks in particular to the good offices of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers, political will was harnessed to detailed groundwork to prepare the way for a registered company called the GTC (England and Wales) to prepare the way for legislation (Sayer, 2000). Finally, in 1998 legislation providing for the creation of general teaching councils for England and for Wales was

completed, with the councils starting work in 2000. The statutory responsibilities of these independent organizations, defined in the Act, included providing advice on the supply, recruitment and initial training of teachers, their induction into the profession and – highly significant for any implication of professionalism – their continuing professional development. The councils were to be responsible for the registration of teachers, the determination of standards of good conduct and practice, and decisions over the fate of those breaching those standards.

Perhaps now the debate over recognition of professionalism could be concluded as the GTCs took their place alongside the General Medical Council and the Law Society as guarantors of status. However, at the time of writing, 150 years of aspiration, gestation and implementation have been negated in England at a stroke of Secretary of State Gove's pen. The General Teaching Council for England operates under an elongated death sentence. As far as the profession and the public are concerned no decision has been made as to where the England council's responsibilities will reside, although logic and precedent dictate that they will revert to the Department for Education, even if in disguise.

Wales, taking over responsibility for education under devolution, acquired its own General Teaching Council and it is the Welsh education minister who decides on the future of the GTCW. At the time of writing, after two years of uncertainty it has been decided that GTCW will not only survive, but will expand to cover teachers in FE colleges and learning assistants.

However, the practical and theoretical arguments about the nature of professional recognition will remain abundantly alive in Wales. That is why analyzing some concepts of professionalism have profound practical implications.

Is Teaching a Profession?

Why is it germane to start with a lengthy preamble about the general teaching councils? The relevance lies in the history which we have outlined. First, teachers have wanted such councils to bolster their professional image by providing formal recognition which they would want to argue puts them, in this respect at least, on a par with the most high status of historical professions. Secondly, having achieved such councils, we might expect their terms of reference to provide a de facto definition of what

constitutes the profession of teaching. The General Teaching Council was intended to be an independent body. Its responsibilities were to include the registration of teachers, determination of fitness to teach, to 'advise the government and other public bodies on matters related to the teaching profession, including training, professional development and teacher supply' and be responsible for sustaining and contributing to 'professional improvement in the public interest' (Sayer, 2000: 3). The expectation of the author of the standard work on the General Teaching Council was that the council 'should be expected to become the prime source of advice on the qualities and qualifications to be required for entry to teaching; on the criteria for recognition of initial teacher education and training courses; on the criteria for completion of induction as a teacher; on professional expectations upon teachers; and on continuing professional development and training qualifications. Whatever bodies may in future accredit, fund, conduct and operate such courses, it will be the GTC [*sic*] on behalf of teachers and their public which will advise the government on what should be the *professional* [my ital.] expectations, and on what should be the criteria for *professional* [my ital.] acceptability' (Sayer, 2000: 4).

A common thread may be identified, not surprisingly, in Wales. Angela Jardine argues that 'teaching has long been revered as a vocation . . . but, if one thing has changed in recent years, it is that teaching has also come to be respected as a profession in its own right' (Jardine, 2010: 16). She ascribes this to improvements in initial teacher training, induction and continuing professional development. These elements, coming from the current chairwoman of the General Teaching Council for Wales, must contain features regarded as central in designating any job as being a profession. Other activities of the GTCW which she lists – keeping a professional teaching register, instituting a code of practice – must be seen at least as a badge of professionalism, if not a practising definition. Some of these elements lead to another crucial focus of teacher professionalism – perhaps the most important – which is that teachers themselves recognize and regard their job as a profession on a par with others in which participants look upon themselves in the same light. A further step would be that the members of the general public take it as a matter of course that teachers are members of a profession, like doctors and lawyers. It may be, however, that nursing provides the nearest parallel to the development of a concept of professionalism in its ranks. Only relatively recently has nursing become an all-graduate occupation. In the past it has often been spoken of as a vocation rather than a profession. Salaries in nursing have reflected lower

status within the hospital hierarchy compared with doctors. Qualified teachers might wish to bear such nuances in mind in relation to one policy change advocated by the chair of the GTCW – the inclusion of classroom assistants on a professional register. While the practical argument is irrefutable – that classroom assistants have become crucial in the education of children – it is a matter for debate as to wherein lies the correlation between a high level of initial qualification such as a degree, and the determination of designation as a profession.

The emphasis on continuing professional development is the most significant in her article. This now familiar phrase takes the professionalism of teachers for granted. We should note that the concept of continuing professional development (CPD) in education, as in the other professions, is not new. Teachers have been going on courses at least since the 1930s (McNair, 1944). What is new is the acceptance that without it individual teachers, like other professionals, cannot justify themselves. The necessity for intellectual refreshment, learning new skills, keeping up to date with recent trends and sharing best practice is crucial, but what is interesting is that the notion of in-service training has given way to CPD. These are not neutral terms but encapsulate current attitudes.

Unsurprisingly given her role in the GTCW, Angela Jardine sees it as needing to expand its role if it is fully to reflect teacher professionalism. The approval of courses of initial teacher training would reflect the status of other professional organizations – although vested interests will make it difficult to achieve, despite this function being part of the role of the teaching council in Scotland. Certainly within its purview should be the maintenance of standards of qualified teacher status, and its role in CPD must be regarded as central and crucial.

It will be obvious from this discussion that there are two central dimensions to the argument about professionalism in relation to the teaching profession. The first is purely practical. How significant for professional recognition is the independence to control access to and continuing membership? In England, its teaching council is under sentence of death. Presumably the state will determine matters of qualification, registration, continuing professional development and disciplining of errant members – essentially the status quo ante. The whole process will be anonymized and possibly politicized covertly rather than overtly. This changes the relationship between state and teachers and, however much it might be argued that it has always reflected reality, is modified when an intermediary buffer disappears. It may seem odd in post-National

Curriculum days to argue that it will become easier to interfere in the work of individual teachers along whatever lines the state determines, but the independence of any professional body, however limited its clout, provides an element of openness which arguably should be central to those entrusted with the mediation of a culture to future generations.

Secondly, what is the significance, if any, of 'professionalism' in the twenty-first century? It is to this crucial question that we now turn.

What is a Profession?

We have seen that this concept is elusive and it would be impertinent to pretend that it is possible in the space available to do more than skate over discussions which have informed myriad articles and books. The word itself has been devalued in recent decades as it has been invested with different layers of meaning. At one level, it is used to denote payment for a service – 'the professional cricketer, or historian' as opposed to the amateur. Rather absurdly, when England win a cricket match their captain deems the performance 'professional'. The oddest overlay is that which refers to 'professional fouls' in football matches. If we revert to more traditional uses there are complications.

Academic discussion – sociological and philosophical in particular – about the nature of professionalism has intensified over the last half-century as the number of occupational bodies claiming professionalism for their members has proliferated with the transformation of an industrial economy to a service-based society. Ann Edwards (2010) has introduced her most recent work thus:

> Lying in the background to the book is a shift from seeing professionals as the sole guardians of exclusive sets of knowledge, operating within established practices which are imbued with late nineteenth century Liberal values of personal trust and the care of others. The shift arose initially . . . from the bureaucratisation of the professions . . . and has been accelerated by a climate which has emphasised their accountability . . . The argument will be made that as professionals work increasingly across professional boundaries on complex problems with other practitioners and with clients, they operate outside the safety net of their organisations' bureaucratic procedures. Consequently, rather than following established institutional practices, they have to rely on their specialist knowledge and their expertise in working with others while they negotiate the accomplishment of complex tasks. This kind of relational practice means that practitioners need to be able to label their own expertise; recognise, draw on and contribute to the funds of expertise

> available; and demonstrate a strong sense of their own identities as practitioners whose actions can make a difference in the world . . . inter-professional work and more responsive work with clients can give rise to a new and enhanced form of professionalism. Engagement with the knowledge offered by others marks this new form of professional practice as different from the exclusivity and disinterest of that 100 years ago. Yet some of the same priorities are shaping professional action, including a concern with the well-being of vulnerable clients, professional values and expertise. (Edwards, 2010: 1)

Later, Edwards is drawn to a wider definition that 'professional expertise involves engagement with what matters' (ibid.: 137), necessitating the relational engagement between different kinds of practitioners which she regards as crucial. She points out that

> in some areas of care and elsewhere, responsibilities previously assumed by accredited professionals are carried out by untrained staff . . . conceptualisations of professionalism can be unclear . . . as Wilensky observed, the criteria for professionalism have been shifting. In an attempt to seek some stability, his view was that: 'the degree of professionalization is measured not just by the degree of success in the claim to exclusive technical competence, but also by the degree of adherence to the service ideal and its supporting norms of professional conduct'. (Edwards, 2010: 2–3; Wilensky, 1964)

Wilensky (1964: 138), in mentioning that sociologists have tended to see real estate agents, medical technicians, barbers and taxi drivers being 'professionalized', adheres to traditional measures – a technical base (acquired through long training, rather than apprenticeship – highly significant for teachers' claims), an exclusive jurisdiction over standards of training, and the full trust of the public. However, even he concluded in the 1960s that elements of professionalism and bureaucracy would become increasingly entwined, and this has certainly proved to be the case, probably beyond his own expectations, with accountability and target setting – particularly relevant to the teaching profession – adding in far too great a measure to the mix (see Edwards, 2010: 4).

Complicating matters further are those who hold that discussions of the constituent elements of professionalism are actually tautologous. They argue that definitions of professionalism revolve around extracting certain features from occupations which seem to have acquired the status of profession (medicine, law) by default. Such features – monopoly of a sphere of knowledge, usually associated with the use of esoteric language, high levels of qualification, provision for CPD, independent responsibility for

determining standards of conduct, shared values – are then used as markers for deciding on whether other occupations qualify for the name 'profession' (Runte, 1995). Despite this circularity the debate will not go away. Evetts (2003) has argued more recently for a distinction between organizational professionalism where the concept is used to exert control, and occupational professionalism, of the traditional kind. More recently, Edwards has taken a broader view of professionalism as 'expertise in practices that have some claim to being considered professional by virtue of their need to do more than simply follow routine procedures or tackle prescribed tasks' (Edwards, 2010: 99). She has brought out the complexities revealed by present-day professionals working in an ever-extending knowledge and occupational base in a world of increasing bureaucratic complexity in its structures and financial constraints. The strictly defined features of the professionalism debate of the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century are outdated. Nevertheless, they still form part of the dialogue around status and independence which surface regularly in the teaching world.

The Teaching Profession

Where is teaching on this spectrum? In terms of a long period of education and training, a commitment to induction and continuing professional development, an element of service and often a sense of vocation, modern-day teaching measures highly. However, the history of teaching must be regarded as rather more equivocal in this regard than that of more established professions. Only in the twentieth century did teaching develop fully from an apprenticeship model to one of practice based on theory. Even then, in the early part of the century, teacher educators disagreed on the theoretical base. A long debate raged over whether teaching was an art, a craft or a science (Robinson, 2004). As recently as 1964 Wilensky categorized school teaching as a 'borderline' profession (Wilensky, 1964: 142).

In terms of the specialist knowledge often deemed characteristic of a profession its position is equivocal. In the actual communication of information to pupils, as opposed to the theoretical underpinning which may underlie that transmission, the language is hardly specialist, particularly in primary schools or in arts subjects in secondary schools. Teachers do not indulge in the routine use of haematoma for swelling. Research articles in medicine enjoy a vocabulary hardly accessible to the layperson; lawyers employ a language in their documentation which is obtuse; some

sociologists (and education theorists) have often wanted seemingly to invent an inaccessible pseudo-scientific language; even some literary critics have sought to make their subject inaccessible to the layperson by reaching for obscurantism. Teachers do not and cannot, at least in communicating with their pupils. If this is accepted, then teaching is in a rather odd position. Teachers of mathematics or science at higher levels are certainly using specialist terms or symbols but the whole purpose of their existence is to share that knowledge with the wider population, not to monopolize it. It is not the application of the knowledge of itself which requires a code of conduct and a sense of vocation but the act of selflessly extending this knowledge to vulnerable members of the population not able to judge for themselves whether the knowledge they are receiving or the methods by which it is transmitted are providing them with the best possible opportunity for initiation into it.

Runte's views are others worth following further, both because they are contentious and because they bear heavily on the contemporary situation of teachers in Wales and England (Runte, 1995). They are also in my view misleading. While I concur that sociological concepts do not shed much light on the nature of teacher professionalism, and that teacher autonomy has been significantly breached in recent decades, I cannot agree that the creation of professional bodies for teachers has generally been a government ploy to undermine the teaching unions, though I accept that I am extrapolating from his Canadian example. This is to introduce an element of confrontation which already poisons some relationships between the teaching council and the teaching unions in Wales. The functions of the two bodies are substantially different. While both would wish to press their views on education on government, the professional development and enforcement of a code of conduct are matters for a less partisan body than a teaching union which exists to defend the interests of its members, including remuneration, at almost any price. This delicate balance, along with the interest of local authorities, inspectors and government, is a crucial element in safeguarding the interests of teachers and, above all, the interest of pupils.

Nor can I accept that the analogy of deskilling in the so-called professions is in any way analogous to that of the dehumanization caused when industrialization transformed craft labour into factory labour. For example, the imposition of a National Curriculum undermined teacher autonomy, and Literacy and Numeracy hours went further, but the mediation of that curriculum calls on all the sophisticated skills traditionally associated with

teaching effectively. It remains a truism of research that despite attempts at standardization, differences in achievement within individual schools and between schools of similar intake remain. They are explained mainly by the relative effectiveness of individual teachers' skills and abilities. Of course, it is possible to postulate an Orwellian world in which the state dictates not only the curriculum and its examination but a totality of rote learning reminiscent of payment by results in the 1860s. However, the trend more recently, particularly in Wales, has been to see a movement away from rigid prescription to a more child-centred regime particularly evident in the Foundation Phase. We have a long way to go yet to staffing by Skinnerian teaching machines.

An Outdated Question?

While it is obviously inaccurate to conclude that there is no such thing as a profession – all those who use the term in everyday speech and in writing cannot be talking about a completely nonsensical concept – focussing on this question centrally is in my view no longer useful. Ultimately, I would argue that debates and overarching theories about whether teaching is a profession are now out of date and irrelevant. At a petty level they display a lack of self-confidence. At the far more crucial level of how that professionalism should be guaranteed they result in coming at the justification of practical measures such as the existence of general teaching councils from the wrong angle. I suggest that in the twenty-first century teaching as an occupation no longer requires the bolstering of incontrovertible membership of a version of Russell Group professions, even if there is such a thing. It is there already. Being hung up on whether teaching is a vocation, a profession or an occupation is no longer helpful (for a more closely argued perspective from a different angle see Edwards, 2010: 10–11). Teaching has grown up – it is no longer the low-level 'free-for-all' of the early nineteenth century. We are now in a position to look at what characterizes teaching and extrapolate from that how the interests of teachers and, above all, the interests of pupils are best served. Whether these are characteristic of other jobs which we traditionally call professions matters little. In any case, any more overarching concept of professionalism would need to be in terms of 'a refreshed version of being a professional in the public sector which sustains the service ideal, emphasises knowledge as a practitioner resource, and which offers some protection to practitioners who

themselves may be vulnerable as they work responsively with clients and across professional boundaries' (Wilensky, 1964: 3–4).

It is impossible to encapsulate adequately the multifarious functions of teachers in contemporary society. What is irrefutable is that teachers occupy a central role in the development of almost all children, a role second only to that of parents, in initiating them into the complexities of modern society and equipping them to play a role in that society commensurate with their talents, such that those talents are developed to the maximum. Society regards the task as crucial and has required, through its governments, that a variety of expertise is required. It is in analyzing briefly aspects of how this expertise should be developed that we should start. Teaching is a hugely challenging task, so how does society equip teachers to undertake it?

First, society identifies the requirements to be made of those it charges with the education of young people. Broadly, there has to be some transmission of the central elements of our culture, however defined. There has also to be training and development of skills which modern society deem relevant to young people to ensure their full participation in the smooth running and prosperity of that society, however defined.

Secondly, society acknowledges the complexity of preparation for these tasks by requiring teachers to undergo a four-year period of initiation, into both the elements of the subject matter which they will be charged with teaching, and also the specifics of the mediation of the subject matter and the acquisition of skills to pupils across the age range. This is then followed up by a year of induction. The length and depth of this training reflects an expectation of expertise in teachers which has grown steadily through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly in the change from school-based apprenticeship models to college- and university-based training from the later nineteenth century (Robinson, 2004). This is the essential difference between teachers and teaching assistants – and an essential demarcation of their role whatever the close relationships which develop in their joint interest in the welfare of their pupils.

Thirdly, there is a requirement that teachers be engaged to a greater or lesser extent in CPD so that the knowledge gleaned in initial training can be coordinated with the fruits of experience and new knowledge to add ever more dimensions to effective teaching. In Edwards's words, professional knowledge 'needs to respond to changing conditions, resources and problems and to be found in practices that can absorb new knowledge and

ways of working' (Edwards, 2010: 5 and 10). Furthermore, we must follow Edwards by arguing vociferously in relation to teaching that 'when the resources of several practitioners are brought to bear on a complex problem, their effect is enhanced' (ibid.: 6). The knowledge of such resources – social workers, IT specialists, medics, dieticians, psychologists – can only be utilized under a regime of carefully structured in-service training. Underlying Edwards's recent work on the practicalities of being an expert professional practitioner is an acceptance that a whole range of people, some categories of which we might once have been reluctant to classify as professionals – for example, 'professionals in the media' (ibid.: 72) – must pool their expertise in order that the most effective programmes of action may be carried out – 'mediated by the capacity to "know how to know who"' (ibid.: 30). The implications for in-service training for teachers are immense. Expertise across such a range cannot possibly be learned in initial training, so regular opportunities must be available throughout a career. However, the knowledge of the range of expertise outside the core profession can only be effective if the knowledge base essential to that profession is already in place (ibid.: 34). For teachers, the intense initial preparation for the job is essentially linked to continuing development.

This in-service training requirement is far less appreciated by the general public and often underrated by politicians, with the result that taxpayers' money is less forthcoming than for initial training. Yet it fuels the engine of effective teacher performance across the age range. Its scale and effectiveness, just in Wales, would require a separate article to do it justice. A brief illustration may be provided by the story of CPD in Wales in the last decade. After a three-year pilot project, from 2004 to 2009, the General Teaching Council for Wales administered a bursary fund for practising teachers, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. During the five years of the GTC programme proper nearly £2 million funded 18,000 teachers across all the Welsh local authorities and across all phases of school education. Projects covered all subjects of the curriculum as well as such areas as management, special needs and thinking skills. While the keenest volunteers among the teachers were those with fewer than ten years' teaching experience, all phases of experience – including teachers with more than thirty years in education – were strongly represented. (These generalizations are based on information provided directly by the GTCW, to whose chief executive and staff I am grateful.)

The subject matter of the small-scale research projects which resulted produced practical investigation into topics varying from networking in

developing the Welsh language in the Foundation Phase to assertive discipline strategies in the secondary school; from research into pupil self-assessment in Key Stage 3 English across the curriculum to the integration of Down's syndrome children in mainstream education. The outstanding feature of these titles, randomly chosen from the vast number available, is not only the anxiety of teachers to further their own practical skills but the variety of expertise which developed as a result. CPD does actually provide a particularly significant instance of how the priorities of teachers and governments differ and how the rich tapestry which results from teacher perceptions of their own needs contrasts with the stereotyping of government initiatives. The Welsh Government has now withdrawn all CPD funding from the General Teaching Council for Wales – in fact, it now provides no funding for professional development to any outside organization. Any available funding would appear now to be earmarked for priorities identified by the government, particularly literacy, numeracy and the alleviation of the poverty gap impact. Such a centralized approach epitomizes the differences which result between central direction and the choices of teachers. If a balance is to be regarded as enriching then the existence of independent disbursement of funding must be deemed essential.

Fourthly, for obvious reasons there has to be a check that only those who fulfil the relevant criteria actually are appointed to teaching posts, so there has to be a central register of teachers which makes this information available. This has to be allied to a code of conduct of personal behaviour, not solely confined to school, which is sufficiently strict to command public confidence.

Fifthly, we must chime with Wilensky in identifying the service ideal, the notion of putting client (pupils) before profit as central. 'The service ideal is the pivot around which the moral claim to professional status revolves' (Wilensky, 1964: 140).

So, by beginning our analysis from where teaching now is, certain characteristics identify those who become teachers, all of which require safeguarding. However, from those characteristics which have been identified it is obvious that there is one underlying theme – the degree of teacher independence from outside forces, particularly governments. In the absence of full privatization this will always be the case. What is now being christened the chaos theory of government in England, said by some commentators to characterize English policies in health, education and community control, merely disguises the ultimate authority of the state

against which all occupations have to fortify themselves to a greater or lesser degree if they are not to be employed as civil servants. The real significance of any present debate about the status of teachers as professionals might now be stated. Teachers have their own areas of technical competence (to use Wilensky's term) which might be broadly interpreted as their degree of specialist training, their involvement in interpreting what society might consensually lay down as the broad parameters of its culture and its practical requirements for progress, their sense of duty towards those within their charge beyond that of mere supplier and customer of a product, and their control of rules within which the ethical framework as well as the practical requirements of this relationship have to be interpreted. If teachers do not have control of these areas then their claim to high status – and eventually their effectiveness – must be diluted accordingly. This is what is at stake.

Above all perhaps, we would want to identify teaching in its 'role orientation' with wanting 'to give competent, objective, technical service of which answering colleagues would approve' and must be 'highly identified with [the] profession' (Wilensky, 1964: 151) as opposed to being identified primarily with the organization and management of the workplace. The implication is profoundly and glaringly obvious. A consciousness of high status among teachers rests above all on the degree of independence with which it puts into practice society's goals for its children. As with any other profession this does not imply and cannot imply total independence from the politicians in a representative democracy who interpret society's wishes and disburse its money, but the degree of independence is crucial to the well-being both of the profession and also of the society it serves.

Having started with mention of the general teaching councils I am now driven logically to support their existence, or at least that of bodies very similar to them. They are wholly different animals from trade unions, which are not distinctive to the traditionally professional sector. The BMA is not the GMC. If teaching is to retain the status which it has come to enjoy in the relatively recent past this must be safeguarded by rigorous registration, demanding initial qualification, an independent view of effective CPD and, above all, by an independent assessment, insulated against overweening government control, of how future generations are to be educated – in the fullest meaning of that term.

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