

# Professionalism in teaching



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A Search of Teacher Professionalism. A personal contemplation through the Lenses of a Traditional, Conflict Theory, Neo Liberal and Critical Perspective.

In a recent Guardian Secret instructor article ( 2015 ) one school leader explains how they feel lost, set adrift, since the last update to the Ofsted review counsel.

“ I used to believe I knew the regulations for reviews – I built my calling on it.”

Is this a contemplation of the learning profession today? Have instructors been re-professionalised under the examination of performativity as put forward by Ball ( 2003 ) . I aim to see these thoughts looking at the function of the professional with peculiar accent on my ain feelings of professionalism.

I joined the learning profession to do a difference or that is surely how it felt. My determination to go a instructor was built upon a desire to act upon the life opportunities of immature people. But holding entered the profession with apparently baronial purposes what kind of profession have I joined? What kind of professional have I become?

The nature of professionalism has been capable to much scholarly argument. It has even been suggested ( Whitty, 2000 ) that a profession is whatever society thinks it is and hence this could intend we have to see professionalism in a personal context. In order to discourse the construct of professionalism I foremost need to try to specify the term ‘ professionalism’

for myself. The footings professional and professionalism mean different things to different people.

Through my readings around *professionalism* at that place look to be four chief constructions with which to see the construct of professionalism. I will analyze each of these stances and reflect on my ain sense of professionalism through these lenses. Ultimately trying to see each positions public-service corporation for my ain pattern.

### Traditional

Traditional positions of professionalism are mostly based on businesss like medical specialty and jurisprudence ( Demirkasimoglu, 2010 ) . These professions have high position and wage but besides high degrees of liberty. For this ground businesss like learning are traditionally accepted as quasi professional in that ‘ Bureaucratic control.... fills the demand for coordination by restricting the semiprofessional ‘ s discretion or autonomy’ ( Leiter, 1981 pp225 )

There are many facets of learning that I believe correlative with the traditional position of a professional. Teachers provide a public service, require adept cognition and accomplishments, and are driven by a moral jussive mood. I would aline myself with these rules and therefore to some extent with the position that instruction is a traditional profession and that I myself am a professional from a traditional position. Teaching as an business does nevertheless differ from traditional professions. Teachers are capable to more organizational control than both attorneies and physicians and

although the duty of instruction is huge it could be argued that it is not every bit big as those of autonomy and wellness.

When I gain my own sense of professionalism from a traditional position, I besides question if there is a further differentiation between modern instruction and the traditional position of professionalism.

Traditional professions afford a important sum of distance between the client and the practitioner. Within instruction, due to the regular interaction between client and practitioner and the nature of the relationships that are formed this metaphorical distance is not so extended. This thought leads me to see the alterations that may hold occurred to teacher professionalism as the function of instructor has altered over the past century. Teachers are expected to be more than imparters of cognition and as the accent on their function has shifted so excessively has the potency for instructors to be considered alongside physicians and attorneys as traditional professionals. From a personal position I find it difficult to align my own feelings of professionalism with the traditional position that would divide instruction as a high position profession from other businesses. As much of an instructor's work is conducted through direct client interaction and the relationship that is formed is an indispensable portion of successful pattern, much like nurses and societal workers, this consigns learning to stay quasi professional and for me to not see myself an instructor in the to the full traditional sense.

### Conflict Theory

Another position point on the nature of the professional can be gained from Conflict Theory. Conflict Theory originates from Marxist idea. Macdonald

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( 1995 ) suggests that from a Marxist point of view it is not the cognition that makes a professional high position but the value of this cognition to the capitalist system. Therefore the professionals maintain constructions in society by guaranteeing that places are monopolised. Conflict Theory proposes that the societal relationships of differing groups are built upon power and development. Thus it is suggested that in consequence the instruction system is organised to guarantee that power is exercised and different groups within society exploited.

Ozga ( 1987 ) defines teacher professionalism as a signifier of province control with instructors being capable to ‘ direct’ or ‘ indirect rule’ by the province as political, economic, societal and cultural fortunes determined. This suggests that the province is utilizing professionalism as a agency to derive coveted results.

“ When we hear from all sides the demand for an debut of regular course of study and particular scrutinies the ground behind it is, of class, not a all of a sudden awakened ‘ thirst for knowledge’ but the desire for curtailing the supply of these places and their monopolisation by the proprietors of educational certificates”

( Weber, cited in Gerth and Wright Mills 1946, pp 242 )

Analyzing the statements made by struggle theory about the function of professionals in society fills me with personal anxiousness and apprehensiveness. Conflict Theory suggests a function of the professional that significantly differs from my own feelings of morality, unity and service. I believe that I entered the learning profession to be of value. I see the

function of a instructor as potentially huge in single lives. Teachers have the chance to develop the academic ability and accomplishment of their pupils but besides to hold influence on their development as people. To propose that portion of the function of professionals, and hence instructors, is to guarantee that groups within society are restricted and that the construction of society maintained is, for me, and I would propose many others within instruction, unpalatable.

This does non nevertheless intend that this is an wrong point of view. It would be difficult to reason that the instructors professionalism has been used by the province to pull strings the profession into certain manners of behavior. The instructors criterions ( 2011 ) so define the behavior and attitudes which set the needed criterion for behavior throughout a teacher's calling.

I find it hard to square this peculiar circle. I see no job with the statements made within the Teachers Standards but there still remains a discordancy between this position of an imposed professionalism and my ain feelings of myself as a professional. Whatever the larger political constructions that we live and work under this does non intend we have to carry through the function suggested.

Evans ( 2008 ) sees professionalism more as a amount of persons ' professionalism orientation' . The plural of how a group of persons perceive their ain professionalism. Professionalism is co constructed by the actions and beliefs on persons who make up the profession. I believe strongly in the function of instructors to interrupt norms in society and enable those that are

less fortunate to win. Conflict Theory may propose that systems would do this hard nevertheless I do not experience that this in any manner defines myself as a professional. Conflict Theory suggests a position of instructors as an occupational group with a professionalism defined by the province. Is the single sense of 'professionalism orientation' as outlined by Evans not a better step of an individual's professionalism? Or as Gewirtz stated

".. instructors are not the inactive victims of classical Marxism, inadvertently co-opted as agents of the province: they are active agents defying province control schemes and coercing their employers to polish and make over those strategies." ( Gewirtz, cited in Hextall et al 2007, pp39 )

Since all of the points above I do not experience that the decisions from Conflict Theory aid to specify an single instructor as a professional. I surely do not experience that they help to specify me as a professional. A sense of professionalism seems more personal than that which can be provided by wide statements defined by the province.

### Neo-Liberal

We live in an age of high degrees of external answerability. Ofsted, School conference tabular arrays, the National Curriculum and public presentation related wage are merely some of the high interest steps which have been introduced over the past 30 odd ages.

Gewirtz ( 2002 ) argues that the restructuring of the instruction system has been part of the dismantlement of welfarism whilst presenting managerialist signifiers of control and increased centralization. This is seen

as portion of a Neo-Liberal attack to make competition and markets where antecedently there were none. This Neo-Liberal docket has significantly shifted the function of the professional.

“ The preferable scheme of the neo-liberal marketisers has been deregulating of the profession..” ( Gleeson & A ; Husbands, 2001, pp287 )

Dale ( 1989 ) describes a displacement in the manner of province ordinance of instructor professionalism. Regulation has altered professionalism from a accredited signifier of liberty to a more tightly controlled ‘ regulated’ liberty. These positions do non hold with premises that instructors have been traveling towards a professional position analogue to that which has been attained by the traditional professions of Medicine and Law.

The March of the Neo-Liberal docket has resulted in a ‘ struggle over the instructors sole’ ( Ball 2003 pp 217 ) . Ball suggests that the debut of such performativity has led to an eroding of the traditional professional values, a displacement in professional individuality and the significance of ‘ professional’ for instructors. This has led to the outgrowth of a new sort of professional with differing professional values.

I can place with some of the ‘ new professional’ values that Ball ( 2003 ) identifies. The increased degrees of performativity have altered the manner the profession as a whole behaves and I think single positions of their ain professionalism. I can place with some of the traits Ball attributes to the new directors.



‘ Thus the work of the director, the new hero of educational reform, involves transfusing the attitude and civilization within which workers feel themselves accountable and at the same clip committed or personally invested in the organisation’ ( Ball, 2003, pp219 )

Whilst recognizing the negative spin that Ball is putting on this function I besides would propose that the new directors have helped better the instruction system through answerability and investing steps. I do see these properties as portion of my own professional identify.

However Ball continues by proposing that portion of the director function is to make a docile ( and capable ) work force. I do not see this as something that is portion of my professional identify. I feel that we should be developing instructors who are able to oppose and drive the profession forward. Who have ‘ extended professionalism’ ( Hoyle, 1975, pp 318 ) , an ability to hold a much wider position of what instruction involves.

Whilst Ball is strongly opposing the usage of performativity and the values of the new professionalism that has arisen from its usage I find that some, but not all, of these values do align with my own feelings of professionalism.

Critical Positions.

More recent positions on professionalism suggest that we might rethink professionalism to be about how we do what we do, instead than an acquired position. Whitty ( 2008 ) moves beyond the impression of educational reforms being used to de-professionalise instructors but alternatively for these to be an effort at re-professionalisation. There is recognition that

educational reform has brought about alterations in professionalism but that this may be building a new type of professional potentially more appropriate to modern-day demands.

Hargreaves ( 2000 ) identified four ages of professionalism: the pre-professional age, the age of the independent professional, the age of the collegial professional and post-professional or postmodern. The 4th age, post-professional or postmodern, which Hargreaves believes the profession is traveling into ( or has already entered ) is characterised by a battle between groups or forces which are seeking to de-professionalise the work of learning and groups or forces who are seeking to redefine teacher professionalism.

‘ One possible result of these procedures is a new, postmodern professionalism that is broader, more flexible and more democratically inclusive of groups outside learning and their concerns than its predecessors.’ ( Hargreaves, 2000, pp167 ) .

These are some of the properties that would be clear in postmodern professionalism.

Whitty ( 2008 ) categorises the instructors into two distinguishable groups. The ‘ new entrepreneurs’ and the ‘ old collectivists’ . Both Whitty and Hargreaves are proposing we are at clip of alteration in instructor professionalism. But unlike the ‘ new managers’ defined by Ball ( 2003 ) the new enterprisers who have embraced the altering educational dockets have gained more possible position and waggess, including broader preparation chances and a limited grade of liberty. So instead than pull offing the line of

performativity the new enterprisers have the chance to assist re specify teacher postmodern professionalism.

It does experience that the work of instructors has altered even within my ain professional life. I would propose that the critical position lens allows for potentially the greatest contemplation into my ain ideas of professionalism. As antecedently mentioned I can place with some of the traits Ball ( 2003 ) attributes to the new directors. When these professional properties are considered from a critical position lens I begin to experience that I can organize some stronger sentiments as to my ain professional individuality.

The traditional professional has some characteristics that are in common with my ain professional identify. However, the client-professional relationship that is formed within the work of instructors leads me to believe that I can non aline my ain professionalism with these traditional beliefs. Whist Conflict Theory and a Neo-Liberal analysis let us to see the function that the province has, and is, playing on instructor professionalism I do experience that that the function the province is playing defines me as a professional.

Evans ( 2008 ) proposes that professionalism is non something that is an idealized construct. Professionalism has to be something that people really ‘ do’ non something that authorities or any other bureau pushes upon them. Therefore professionalism has a really personal context. I believe that I hold some of the professional properties that would be associated with the new directors described by Ball ( 2003 ) and the ‘ new entrepreneurs’ described by Whitty ( 2008 ) . I believe that systems of answerability and investing

within the administration are portion of my ain feeling of professionalism. These are about increasing teacher public presentation but for the benefit of the immature people who have one opportunity of wining within the instruction system. However I besides feel that there are countries of my ain professionalism that are non discussed in these functions. The construct of ‘ extended professionalism’ ( Hoyle, 1975 ) is something that is deep within my ain feelings of professionalism. It is a instructors responsibility to continually better, to value the underlying teaching method, to hold a much wider position of what instruction involves and to follow by and large a more critical attack to the occupation. ( Evans, 2008 ) . Hence, I would propose that I am potentially a new professional, one who has accepted the alterations of performativity but seeking to see the benefits such performativity can convey every bit good as guaranting that the chief focal point does non roll from what is best for the immature people in our attention.

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