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Professionalism and Professional Status: Contrasting Aspects of the Teacher Role

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Notes:

See *The Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Oct. 1983. This total issue was given to an international collection of papers that explored the possibilities of a theoretical basis for the conceptualisation of teacher education which incorporated a developmental concept and an Induction Year.

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PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL STATUS: CONTRASTING ASPECTS OF THE TEACHER ROLE

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When teachers talk about themselves as professionals two related, but at bottom different, ideas are involved. The first is that of a skilled performance, a practical competence within a sector of activity, underpinned by theory, but essentially the outcome of study, formation, and a lengthy period of immersion in a "technik": classroom teaching and all that goes with it, including all relevant aspects of belonging as a full practicing member to a school or college. The second idea is that of professional status. This is an aspiration or a claim, to some extent realised, to enjoy certain privileges, social esteem, a level of salary, a style of relating to other people who are seen as clients, not customers, together with a degree of autonomy in the workplace. At the level of public rhetoric about pay, conditions of service and comparabilities, discourse moves easily between these two ideas, slipping rather than arguing from one to the other. But in the real world social, economic and political conditions see to it that they are kept separate, save for the lucky few, those "free" professionals such as successful surgeons with large private practices or eminent barristers.

For example, when we talk about professional training for teachers we are usually referring to an arranged set of experiences by which people are prepared to embark on a career which will lead to a degree of maturity in the skilled performances and the sorts of self-presentations and commitments that go with them. These come only after a quite prolonged practical experience, a matter of years rather than weeks. Training, however, involves the conferring of credentials which give a licence to practice (not necessarily a certificate of competence) and entry to an occupational group. These entry gates have been steadily narrowed over the decades, and sharply so in the U.K. since teachers have been in surplus. Because professionalism as skill has been officially credentialised and entry requirements raised it is difficult to talk about it without overtones of professional status lurking about in the language.

That there is a certain tension between the two ideas has implications for Fielding's proposals (1983) and for this reason I want to bring it out more

prominently. The tension arises in the last resort because teachers are an occupational group related in complex and evolving ways to the social structure so that the individual's quest for skills, expertise and self development is channelled and constrained. This is simply to say that neither as individuals nor as an occupational group can teachers avoid taking into consideration the fact that other social groups have direct power over them; they are not like independent painters or writers. The relationship between teachers and power-holding groups has recently been analysed in detail by Archer (1979) in a monumental book. She shows by a convincing historical analysis how teachers have moved from being closely regulated by a single authority, the church, the autocratic or napoleonic state, to a point where, because there exists in modern society a plurality of power-holding groups with differing purposes, they have been able to adopt a stance of negotiation and so win a measure of autonomy. Her book is essentially a magisterial examination of the chances teachers have had and of the strategies they can feasibly adopt to strengthen their structural position as a group. It is thus about professional status, the degree to which teachers can gain a measure of control over their own destinies and activities. The argument has certain overtones of professionalism since individual teachers can only pursue their own development within constraints, namely the expectations, patterns, arrangements and regulations, especially as regards curriculum and approach, laid down by politicians, civil servants and the inspectorate. These are influenced by pressure groups ranging from employers to researchers who use their power to affect which domains and purposes are open to teachers for the pursuit of their daily activities.

The key relationship is therefore with the government, the state, which, however, is not monolithic but an alliance of power within certain changeable assumptions governed by the local culture, social expectations and legal arrangements. Professionals traditionally made a decision about the individual's needs, prescribed the treatment and saw to it that it was carried out. Those who came to them were not customers who could exercise choice but clients who put themselves into the hands of the practitioner and accepted the treatment. They might in some cases change the practitioner (usually with penalties in cash or convenience) and up to a point could negotiate the treatment. But the final judgment lay with the practitioner. This conferred on the professionals opportunities to press for social privileges in return for specialist services of which, in the case of lawyers and physicians, the client was frequently in dire need. The older professions were able to move from the position of servants to a gentlemanly role, elements of which have persisted up to the present (Duman, 1979). In this century the state has emerged as a partner. Nearly all professions

have struck some form of bargain with the government, as a result of which it provides them with part or all of their workplace and facilities, and gives access to large bodies of clients not otherwise easily reachable. Guaranteed a clientele and workbase in this way the professions have grown enormously and captured great public resources; but their members have had to accept control, checks on their autonomy and accountability in return for a secure, graduated, bureaucratised career. In varying degrees (architects less, for example, than physicians) the rewards of professional status have come to be tied to positions in a hierarchy. Progression through the ranks to increasing salary and marks of status is not directly related wholly to professional competence and performance. Luck, scarcity, mobility, qualifications, fashion, political nous, careerism enter into it. The outcome is a measure of separation between expertise and performance in the "technik" and advancement in professional status for the individual. Professionalism, expertise and performance, is a personal matter for the individual; here Fielding's (1983) analysis is appropriate. But since on the other hand, professional status, both for the individual and for the professional group have been partly uncoupled from it, such an analysis must be put into a wider setting. Even if all teachers were to become honours graduates, few would expect that the professional status of the group would automatically rise; and the same is true even if pass rates of pupils in public examinations doubled. More, much more than professional expertise and performance enters into the achievement of professional status. What in fact enters is power, relationships with dominant groups in society and what they see as their interests.

Teachers can do something about their professionalism. There have been considerable advances in that area in the last decades. They cannot do much about their professional status unless a favourable set of circumstances gives them a profitable negotiating stance with the various power-holding groups who control state policy. One such set of circumstances is growth in the system, such as happened both in the nineteenth century and recently, for example, after the war when there was a massive famine in teachers in the U.K. But the state reduced qualifications for entry and diluted the profession by introducing the emergency training scheme which produced teachers in a matter of months in the latter case, offering in return an undertaking to eliminate unqualified staff. Another is international competition as when the launch of the Soviet sputnik rocket alarmed the USA and triggered substantial educational spending. Yet another may be the fear of social unrest amongst discontented and under-employed young people currently menacing the U.K. Nevertheless it is clear that failing economies do not readily invest money in general education, especially when it is the fashion

amongst economists to define such expenditure as consumption.

The upshot of these arguments is that what for Fielding (1983) is, as it were, a "life project", for me must be set in the context of a professional career in a state bureaucracy. The two are of course closely intertwined, but they pull in different ways. The emphasis in Fielding is with professionalism, with how individuals cope with experiences of life in teaching, integrate them into more complex roles, and extend these so as to bring about progressive personality development. Fielding's is a model of personality growth and integration in the conditions of professional life, with implications about how the experiences can be handled, and even, during training, provided in such a way as to enable them more easily to reach a profitable outcome. I feel the need to complement this by a discussion of how people's life projects encounter social constraints and are moulded by them. This throws the emphasis on groups: the occupational group and its various segments, and groups which hold power in society and influence the way it is used.

Let me extend this a little. Reid (1984) writing about the curriculum says:

"In (Meyer's) writings external forces and structures emerge not merely as sources of ideas, promptings inducements and constraints but as definers and carriers of the categories of content, role and activity, to which the practice of schools must approximate in order to attract support and legitimation" (p. 86).

That is to say that constituencies and publics and centres of power are of fundamental importance if publicly financed activities like teaching are to survive. Teachers are not entrepreneurs either in curriculum terms or even, in the last resort, in terms of approach in the classroom; rather, they have constantly to legitimate choices, topics and methods to outsiders by rhetorics of justification and professional ideologies which defend the status of what they are doing. Those subject groups who do so successfully, as the above mentioned book well illustrates, such as Geography and Biology, displace other areas and establish themselves in schools, provide a career ladder, attract resources and public support. Those which fail, such as Rural Studies and Environmental Studies, are quickly marginalised. The career is not available whatever the professionalism of the teachers in that area.

The central tenet of this paper is thus to hold that there is value in conceiving, as Fielding (1983) does, the teachers professional development as an internal dynamic of unfolding, progressive personality integration; but that there is a whole series of external 'interferers' which stem from the social structure to which the occupational group is necessarily related

by its need for resources, clientele and legitimation, which are brought to bear on the unfolding process and potentially distort it. In order to improve the opportunities which are available for the pre-service and in-service preparation of teachers, account has to be taken of both sets of influences.

Having reached this point we can now turn to a short consideration of what the implications of this line of thinking might be. Fielding's (1983) position is fundamentally a libertarian one stressing the importance of autonomous choices made by the developing professional amongst skills and, by implication, other things such as approaches and styles of classroom behaviour in teaching. The intended outcome is greater authenticity in the teacher: not so much "playing" roles because they are institutionally approved, but rather a more genuine global commitment to the tasks and to personal development. Teacher training did not start out like this. As the early French and American title for teacher training establishments *Normal Schools* indicates, the training given assumed that teachers would be socialised to normative dominant values as well as best-practice methods in return for certifications and a career. The classic exposition of this view of teacher preparation is to be found in Emile Durkheim's writings in the early years of this century (though published much later). Archer's analysis (1979) has shown in detail how teachers in various regimes in Europe have by a long struggle got away from this role which looks back to a period when they were in very much a servant and master relationship with their employers. Round about the time that their pupils were all finally incorporated into full citizenship by the extension of the vote to the last categories of young unmarried women in the late 1920 in the U.K., Head Teachers of Elementary schools were able to teach a syllabus which at last did not have to be signed personally by a member of Her Majesty's Inspectorate.

But if the direct political control and domination of elementary school teachers was eroded, there remained the powerful and still very prevalent belief system which enjoined that teachers should be trained and job-socialised to well-specified values and roles, and selected for their willingness to accept such commitments and the style of transmission that went with them. In return teachers were able to win concessions about tenure, security of salary, recognition of certification, guaranteed access to large clienteles as the school leaving age was raised, and thus, by a far from straightforward path, a modest recognition of professional status. After the war in particular, teachers made a number of advances in a rapidly expanding system. This climate has now decisively changed. The system is contracting rapidly, resources are being withdrawn from it, and very marked efforts are being made to control the occupational group. On the

one hand there is the demand from the centre that teachers' work performance should be systematically appraised and weak teachers weeded out, along with the whole climate of distrust and accountability; on the other sharply increased central control of curricula and rigorous appraisal of teacher training institutions and courses by HMI and the accreditation of courses by government sponsored committees.

Any model of teacher training and in-service development needs to be put into the context of the long-term ebb and flow of the government's efforts to retain or regain control over various facets of the educational system and on the other side, of the struggle of the teachers, as individuals, to develop their professionalism with a degree of autonomy, and as an occupational group, to defend and improve their professional status. The realities of power cannot be brushed aside; the constraints on any occupational group in society are real. To propose a model of professional development which ignored them would be sheer romanticism. But some constraints under some conditions can be moved, and different power-holding groups have differing interests. Teachers' quests for greater professional autonomy, their mobilisation of opinion in the competitive struggle for status of subjects and areas of study, their conflicts over the sharing of resources and territory, and their struggle for improved status in relation to other occupations keep the future open.

In the U.K. at present the tide is running strongly in favour of the central authorities. The Department of Education and Science has strongly reasserted its control over the curriculum and certification; and the government has clawed back great financial powers, in both cases overriding Local Government and the relative autonomy of training institutions. But the central authority is not monolithic. There are important differences between the Secretary of State representing politicians, the senior Civil Servants of the D.E.S., the Inspectorate and the Manpower Services Commission. The teachers' Associations, the Local Authority Associations, and to a less extent other interests such as the Examining Boards and the Universities, are standing, bruised, on the sidelines but with a keen eye for opportunities.

The situation is changeable however. There are obvious grounds for believing that western industrial nations are advancing, rather blindly, into new conditions thrown up by high technology and world economic conditions which have had a progressively destabilising effect. In particular, radical changes in the nature and volume of work available have led to massive unemployment heavily concentrated amongst young people. This issue is steadily replacing inflation as the leading vote-sensitive issue. It has

already led to a major restructuring of non-advanced further education, and is making significant inroads into the secondary curriculum through the current emphasis on vocationally orientated courses. It is complicated by the severe drop in the birth rate which is causing increasing change in the secondary curricula on offer, leading to school closures and amalgamations, and soon to have a devastating effect on the classic English sixth form. Together these two bid fair to have the biggest impact on secondary (11-18) schooling since reorganisation to comprehensive patterns.

Schooling is the largest, most organised, and historically the most humane, adaptive mechanism available to modern societies. It is also a main prop of social cohesion and stability. From nowhere, during the bi-partisan decades when the politician responsible for education played a modest role in the cabinet, it has sprung to political significance in a few years. Despite the quite unprecedented reassertion of central direct and ideological control over the educational system in the U.K. such conditions mean that there is plenty of scope for teachers to do something about their professionalism and their status, although for the latter they will have, in the U.K. at least, to await more favourable conditions.

To sum up then. In what Halmos (1965) christened the "caring" professions — nursing, social work, teaching, probation work etc. — there is no tangible outcome as a basis for remuneration and the state is the monopoly employer for practical purposes. Whatever members do about their own professionalism, the state can, and historically has, manipulated the situation to keep in check their aspirations towards professional status, for if occupations of this size increased their power and thus their ability to negotiate successfully for higher rewards and resources it would be economically ruinous. This does not mean however that they are necessarily subservient to the conservative norms and sectional interests of small powerful groups who temporarily hold the reins of political power. The system is needed to build-in to the rising generation a confident grasp of social changes without which societies become stagnant, and decay. Anything which encourages over-adaptation to a particular condition of the social structure at a time of accelerated changes is socially dangerous. There has to be social cohesion, but there also must be processes which accommodate changes, sometimes rapid and drastic. This balance is brought about in democracies, rather untidily, by contentions, negotiations and struggles amongst social groups about how change is to be managed and in whose interest. Even individual teachers may be directly affected. They may be deskilled by changes in the curriculum, their teaching subject may cease to be viable, their career may be abruptly curtailed. Many are able to adapt, not necessarily gladly, changing their work area, reskilling

themselves and cashing in on new developments.

Part of Fielding's argument is for flexibility, for extension of the individual teacher's ability to cope with widening demands despatched by powerful role-senders. It is obviously beneficial if teachers can be helped to adapt creatively their personalities in the manner Kelly (1955) proposes as they come to grips with such personal and professional challenges. But the emphasis on choice and autonomy is important. Counselling services for teachers under stress often seem to encourage their tense clients towards a submission to central norms : change your life-style - don't challenge the system. The counsellors become the ambulance men of a none-too-moral society. There is a respectable alternative tradition which sees education as a process preparing to set people free, as emancipatory, even if freedom has fears, anxieties and responsibilities too great for some to bear. Fielding's views are in this latter tradition. It means that whilst pursuing their personal and professional development, they must not lose sight of the social, political, and economic conditions in which their occupational group has to make its way.

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THE MOVE TOWARDS THE ACCREDITATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION COURSES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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Introduction

In recent years there has been a significant change in the nature of Government (as mediated by the Department of Education and Science - DES) involvement in initial teacher training in England and Wales. Traditionally government has rightly concerned itself with the "manpower problem" of ensuring that the numbers of teachers in training relates to the demands for new teachers by employing authorities and with the "institutional problem" of determining the types of institutions which exist to provide teacher training, how they are organised within the higher education system, and how they are financed. The content of teacher training curriculums and the validation of courses has been seen as the proper responsibility of the qualified, professional staff working in the field of education and teacher training. However, Government has now become interested in the content and quality of the teacher training programmes themselves. This critical concern has been expressed in official publications emanating from the DES such as Department of Education and Science (1982) and culminated in 1983 with the publication of a White Paper entitled "Teaching Quality" (1983). In their efforts to improve the quality of initial teacher training the Secretaries of State for England and Wales announced in the White Paper that they intended to establish criteria against which all future proposed teacher training courses would be assessed and that they would review all existing courses in the light of the criteria. Without going into the details of how it has been accomplished, the upshot has been that the Secretaries of State have established a Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) which has the following terms of reference:

"to advise the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales on the approval of initial teacher training courses in England and Wales".

It is important to note that the membership of CATE is made up of people