MOVING BEYOND RECENT EDUCATION REFORM — AND TOWARDS A DEMOCRATIC PROFESSIONALISM

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Introduction

Devolution and competition, alongside increasing central prescription and performativity demands, have become global trends in education policy over the past twenty years, even though the particular balance of policies has varied from place to place and, indeed, from government to government within particular countries (Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1998). Yet, particularly in those countries that embarked early on these reforms, both market-based policies and so-called 'Third Way' alternatives are already demonstrating their limitations, especially in relation to social justice.

In England, the New Labour government has recently admitted that its own research demonstrates this failure: it shows that, although educational standards have risen overall during its term of office, the relative performance of children from poor socio-economic backgrounds has not improved (Kelly, 2005). This is despite the fact that some of New Labour's policies had been expected to counter the social inequities that had arisen from the policies of their Conservative predecessors. This news did not come as a complete surprise; as early as 1997, the Mortimore & Whitty study had warned that research indicated how the sort of school improvement policies then being advocated by New Labour might well have this effect, unless much stronger measures of positive discrimination were introduced (See Mortimore & Whitty, 1997).

The same publication deplored the way in which many politicians blamed teachers for all the ills of society and failed to recognise the strength of their commitment to educational improvement. It also argued that it was unrealistic to expect teachers alone to overcome the effects of social disadvantage on education.

However, it should also be recognised that there is a sense in which the rise of both education markets and increased state intervention has been a response to some real, as well as perceived, failures on the part of teachers and it is in no-one's interests to deny this. For these reasons, we want to question in this paper the tendency on the part of many critics of current policies to see the solution to continuing educational underachievement as lying in the return to an imagined 'golden age' of teacher autonomy and, associated with this, a conventional notion of teacher professionalism.

More controversially, perhaps, we shall also suggest that, while contemporary reforms have failed to produce the positive equity outcomes that some of their advocates predicted, they have contained some 'progressive moments'. These will need to be held onto as we seek to develop a form of professionalism that transcends both traditional professionalism and the attacks on that tradition implicit in recent reforms. We shall therefore be interrogating these

reforms with a view to establishing the possibilities for what has been termed 'democratic professionalism' (See, for example, Whitty, 2002).

Approaches to Defining 'Professionalism'

As argued in *Making Sense of Education Policy* (Whitty, 2002), sociological discourse about professionalism and the state can go some way in helping us to understand the contemporary condition of teachers as professionals.

The nature of professionalism was subjected to concerted attention by western sociologists initially in the 1950s. The main approach at this point focused on establishing the features that an occupation should have in order to be termed a profession. A typical list included such items as:

- the use of skills based on theoretical knowledge
- education and training in those skills certified by examination
- a code of professional conduct oriented towards the 'public good'
- a powerful professional organisation

(Millerson, 1964)

These lists reflected the nature of established professions such as medicine and law, while occupations that did not entirely meet such criteria were given the title 'quasi-' or 'semi-professions' (Etzioni, 1969). Moving to 'full' professional status was seen as part of an aspiring occupation's 'professional project' and this has applied to the strategy of teachers in many countries.

In contrast, more recent sociological perspectives on professionalism have rejected such normative notions of what it means to be a professional. Instead, they see professionalism as a shifting phenomenon — a profession, they suggest, is whatever people think it is at any particular time (Hanlon, 1998). Rather than asking whether the teaching profession lives up to some supposed ideal, such an approach encourages us to explore the characteristics of teaching as an occupation in the present.

Other contemporary sociologists, particularly those working in a feminist perspective, have taken a more directly critical stance towards traditional conceptions of professionalism. For example, Davies (1995; 1996) regards the 'old professions' as characterised by elitism, paternalism, authoritarianism, highly exclusive knowledge, control and detachment. Such sociologists therefore question whether aspiring to this model is appropriate.

In practice, of course, the characteristics of a profession are increasingly determined to a significant extent by the state, which is now a major stakeholder in defining professionalism in modern societies. Most professionals are employed, or at least regulated, by governments. Professional status, therefore, is typically dependent on the sort of bargain an occupation has struck with the state — what is sometimes called its 'professional mandate'. The nature of teachers' professional mandate has become a key policy issue for governments in many countries, sometimes as part of a broader attempt to redefine professionalism, especially in the public sector, and sometimes as a specific aspect of education reform.

In England, both elements have come into play, as we shall outline in the next section, drawing upon the more detailed analyses offered in *Devolution and Choice in Education*

(Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1998), which was translated into Japanese in 2000, and *Making Sense of Education Policy* (Whitty, 2002), the Japanese version of which appeared in 2004.

From the 'Golden Age' of Teacher Autonomy to 'Steering at a Distance'

The teaching profession in England has never enjoyed the 'licensed autonomy' that occupations such as medicine and law have traditionally had, whereby they have been permitted by the state to regulate their own affairs. Nevertheless, from the 1950s until the mid-1970s, it experienced a considerable degree of de facto autonomy. Indeed, Le Grand (1997) has suggested that this period represented a 'golden age of teacher control'. Parents were expected to trust teachers to know what was best for their children. Accordingly, the teacher's role included the freedom to decide not only how to teach but also what to teach. In this, they had a particular responsibility for curriculum development and innovation. Even though effectively the state paid most teachers' salaries, it did not intervene actively in the content of either teacher training or the work of teachers in schools.

From the mid-1970s, however, there were some dramatic changes in policy and, linked to these, attempts to change the nature of teacher professionalism. Due to economic downturn across the industrialised west, there was growing criticism of the 'swollen state' of post-war social democracy, not only for cost reasons but also because the welfare state had failed to deliver its original promise. This became coupled with an intellectual critique of public sector management on the part of neo-liberals and public choice theorists. The outcome was a call for public sector providers to be subjected to greater accountability — both through market-based competition and increased surveillance by the state. Particularly under Thatcherism and similar regimes elsewhere, there were swingeing attacks on public sector professions, including teachers, who were accused of abusing their autonomy to the detriment of pupils and society.

In England, the 'liberal educational establishment', principally comprising teachers, the Local Education Authorities that employed them and the universities that trained them, came to be regarded by governments as left-leaning and favouring what in their view were highly questionable 'progressive' or 'child-centred' approaches to teaching. Together, lack of competitive discipline and 'progressive' teaching methods were blamed for a levelling down of standards. The effect of these attacks was to erode trust in teachers, thereby facilitating subsequent educational reform.

A key strand of policy, as in other countries, has been to re-position public sector schools as competitors in the marketplace, encouraging them to behave more like those in the private sector. Parents have been offered greater choice over the school that their children attend, which is often coupled with a shift to per capita funding and, in some cases, experimental voucher systems. Budgets and managerial power are handed down to schools in the expectation that they can then respond more effectively to the preferences of parents as consumers.

However, while contemporary governments have been enthusiastic about making schools more receptive to parents' wishes, they are generally unwilling to relinquish control over the outcomes that schools should achieve. Thus, we have the apparent paradox of the 'free market and the strong state' or so-called 'quasi-markets', involving processes of centralised-decentralisation and 'steering at a distance' (Gamble, 1988).

While devolution appears to offer organisations greater autonomy, the state retains overall

strategic control by setting the outputs that providers need to achieve (Neave, 1988: 11). This is operationalised through the range of targets and performance indicators, and associated league tables that have grown up around 'marketised' systems. Indeed, these targets have proliferated in recent years, while efforts to introduce more sophisticated performance indicators — for example, value-added indicators that take into account the intake of schools — have often stalled. Although justified in terms of providing information for the 'consumer' and greater public accountability, these indicators also enable government to scrutinise and direct providers. Arguably, they indirectly influence the priorities of parents — who in turn reinforce the pressure on schools to achieve government-determined outcomes (Adnett & Davies, 2003).

We notice that Muta (2000) has identified similar processes in Japan, particularly since the mid-1990s, and shows how decentralisation has been accompanied by sanctions if municipal authorities and schools themselves fail to follow guidelines set forth by central government.

The extent to which national governments have been willing to intervene in education more directly — eg, by prescribing the school curriculum, through national systems of examination or inspection or through mandating values via citizenship education — has varied between time and place. In many East Asian and continental European countries, there has traditionally been far more central control of some of these matters than in, say, England or the USA. Until recently, they have also been slower than the Anglo-Saxon countries to adopt policies of devolution and choice. What seems to be happening now in at least some of these countries, including Japan, is a re-articulation of existing centralised policies with market-based ones to produce a relationship between the state, the school and the market that is much closer to the one described in *Devolution and Choice in Education*.

Even so, we are talking here about similar trends rather than policy matches. While England already conducts national tests for all pupils at four key stages, we understand that in Japan the assessment of academic achievement at national level has hitherto been conducted through a sample of students every ten years, only recently shifting to testing every two years. That said, municipalities have been carrying out such testing themselves, across all pupils, which does serve some of the same purposes, including that of monitoring school and teacher effectiveness (Kudomi, 2005). In November 2005 the Ministry of Education and Science in Japan began to consider introducing the assessment of academic achievement across all pupils at national level in 2007.

The developments we have outlined have obvious implications for teachers and teacher professionalism. Standardised criteria now feed into the framework of targets and indicators required of schools and individual teachers and the new assessment regimes provide a wealth of performance data for their managers at all levels of the system. Paradoxically, at the same time as apparently ceding more power to managers at school, processes of 'steering at a distance' severely delimit and direct what and how they manage. Yet the stakes that are involved for schools have necessitated the growth of managerialism and the development of a distinct managerial tier within schools, one consequence of which is likely to be increased fragmentation of the profession.

At the same time as greater differentiation of roles within teaching, there have been different responses to recent education reforms. As suggested in *Making Sense of Education Policy*, there appears to be an increasingly marked divide amongst teachers along the lines of what might be summarised as the 'old collectivists' and 'new entrepreneurs'. Those teachers

who have enthusiastically adopted the changing agenda, and who are prepared to 'manage' on behalf of their employers have gained enhanced status and rewards, including broader training opportunities and even a limited degree of licensed autonomy. By contrast, those pursuing the traditional welfarist agenda are no longer trusted and have to be controlled more directly through the detailed prescription and monitoring of their duties. The introduction of performance-related pay and fast-track training and career progression has often compounded this divide.

From New Right Restructuring to New Labour Revisionism

In England, the Conservative government's 1988 Education Reform Act has often been seen as the epitome of a policy combining state control and market forces. Importantly, however, it by no means represented the height of these trends. Despite the proclaimed 'Third Way' approach of New Labour after 1997, in practice its education reforms have built on the 'new right settlement' and even gone beyond it, combining devolution, diversity, choice and even privatisation, on the one hand, and centralised regulation, monitoring and even pedagogical prescription, on the other.

In addition, however, under New Labour, we have recently begun to see some developments that herald an important change in the conceptualisation of teacher professionalism. There seems to have been a progressive move away from a concern with up-skilling teachers as individuals or even seeing responsibility for educational improvement as lying largely in the hands of the teaching profession, however it is regulated. Instead, there has been a growing focus on education as a collective endeavour, encompassing a much wider range of stakeholders than merely the state and teachers themselves.

This approach is effectively summarised in the 1998 Green Paper, *Teachers: meeting the challenge of change* (DfEE, 1998), which notes that 'The time has long gone when isolated, unaccountable professionals made curriculum and pedagogical decisions alone, without reference to the outside world'.

It goes on to list what, in the government's view, a modern teaching profession needs:

- to have high expectations of themselves and of all pupils;
- to accept accountability;
- to take personal and collective responsibility for improving their skills and subject knowledge;
- to seek to base decisions on evidence of what works in schools in the UK and internationally;
- to work in partnership with other staff in schools;
- to welcome the contribution that parents, business and others outside a school can make to its success; and
- to anticipate change and promote innovation.

In this respect, New Labour's agenda for education may provide a useful 'case study' of where professionalism in education is heading — and we want to look briefly at a few examples of the policies that have emerged from it.

Certainly, there has been a reinforcement by New Labour of the need for the state to take

a much more assertive role in specifying what teachers are expected to achieve, rather than leaving it to professional judgement alone. There is a real enthusiasm for intervening in the detail of educational processes, with advice on all aspects of the day-to-day running of schools and teaching itself. Furlong (2005) highlights the 2,000 model lesson plans that teachers can now download from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) website — something that would have been unthinkable in England not many years ago and is reminiscent of traditional English criticisms of highly centralised systems such as those of France and perhaps Japan.

This approach of intervening in the detailed processes of teaching, specifying how to teach in addition to what to teach, supposedly based on evidence of 'what works', is particularly evident in New Labour's National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy — now subsumed into more broadly based Primary and Secondary Strategies.

In one sense, the Strategies are just one element of a long process of curriculum reform in England stretching back to the mid-1980s and the introduction of the National Curriculum. But they are also qualitatively different, both in their immediate impact on teachers' work, and through the pace of change they have ushered in. The Strategies were introduced in 1998 to raise standards in literacy and numeracy — firstly at primary level, but later at secondary level as well — and more recently to improve behaviour and attendance. The Strategies have brought funding for research, professional development courses for teachers, books and the production of classroom materials. Initially, delivery was standardised through prescribed content and a strong focus on professional development that promoted particular teaching approaches, including a well-defined sequence and structure to lessons.

As achievement plateaued, the Strategies were modified — to focus on strengthening key aspects of the work that might most directly deliver on the desired outcomes. This has involved identifying particular aspects of the Strategies to focus on (eg, phonics) and/or particular cohorts that seemed to require further support (eg, boys or those falling behind in Year 1). In this, the levers of monitoring and target setting have made it possible for the centre to manage the Strategies more closely than before, with teachers having to respond quickly to any changes made (Moss, 2004). More recently, though, steering at a distance has entailed a combination of target setting and incorporating schools themselves by requiring them to engage in a process of self-evaluation.

Another area of reform has been teacher education, which has seen changes to both its structure and content. Training is now largely school-based, even on programmes led by universities (Furlong et al, 2000). It is a more practically-based form of preparation, with an emphasis on training rather than education and, in particular, the achievement of practical competences that are set centrally.

The process began with a government circular in 1984 which initiated the development of centrally mandated teacher training requirements — a radical departure from the previous highly diverse array of courses provided by universities and colleges. It made the accreditation of all such courses dependent on meeting officially defined criteria, including the number of weeks to be spent in school and the numbers of hours to be spent on English and mathematics in primary training (DES, 1984). Control was tightened in the late 1980s and early 1990s with a series of government circulars setting out competences that had to be met by students before qualifying to teach (DES, 1989; DfE, 1992, 1993).

For a time, governments began to specify the content of teacher education in increasing

detail. In 1997, a new circular (DfEE, 1997), transformed the 'competences' into more elaborate 'standards'. The competences had not initially been intended to be 'a complete syllabus for initial teacher training' (DfE, 1992), but another development, which was taken up by the incoming New Labour government in 1997, resulted in what was an ultimately unworkable eighty-five page 'national curriculum' for teacher training. This specified in very great detail the content that had to be covered by trainee teachers in English, mathematics, science and ICT. As Furlong et al (2000) point out, although the curriculum was designed to constrain teacher educators rather than the trainees themselves, it could be argued that the 'hidden curriculum' of this approach provided '…appropriate socialisation into a profession in which official prescription of teaching approaches (encroaches) on autonomous professional judgements' (154).

In 2002 the government abandoned this national curriculum and focused on the stipulation of standards to be achieved by all trainees, regardless of the route by which they were trained (DfES/TTA, 2002a). The document outlining the standards, *Qualifying to Teach*, runs to a more modest twenty-four pages and covers three major areas — professional values and practice; knowledge and understanding; and teaching — itself covering planning, expectations and targets, monitoring and assessment, and class management. Minimum requirements are set out in detail in the form of fifty-one outcome statements, which specify what all trainee teachers must know, understand and be able to do. The non-statutory 'handbook of guidance' issued with the standards is for the purpose of clarifying the government's requirements for training in order to provide 'a common understanding amongst all providers and partners' (DfES/TTA, 2002b, Section 1: 2). As Stephens et al (2004) note in their comparison of English and Norwegian teacher education, the handbook has a highly prescriptive tone, requiring training to address all the standards systematically.

We should note that these standards are currently undergoing a process of revision as the former Teacher Training Agency (TTA) — now Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) — develops a framework of standards to cover teachers' whole career rather than just the initial training. This reflects the broader remit of the TDA in contrast to its previous incarnation.

Meanwhile, the agenda for Continuing Professional Development courses for teachers has become increasingly centrally-defined and focused on short-term practical training closely tied to government initiatives — for example, additional phonics training to support the literacy Strategy. Although there was reference in the 1998 Green Paper (DfEE, 1998) to individual learning needs and, for example, research and sabbaticals, this has yet to be fully realised. This is in contrast to the situation in Scotland, where longer-term programmes of professional development were established by 2002 through the Chartered Teacher Scheme, in which the professional body for teachers in Scotland, the General Teaching Council for Scotland has a key role.

Nevertheless, we would argue that the standards introduced in England in 2002 did represent a somewhat more manageable and holistic set than earlier versions. At the same time, there are now much broader opportunities opening-up for extended professional development through, for example, the Postgraduate Development Programme, even if these are currently available only to a small proportion of the workforce.

Teacher Professionalism in a Changing Context

However, these opportunities are increasingly focused on the needs of the school and its pupils rather than the individual teacher. This reflects what is potentially a much more significant development for the future of teacher professionalism in England. An important aspect of recent New Labour policy has been its school workforce remodelling agenda and the 2003 National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload. A key element of this concerns the use of teaching assistants.

While most sections of the support staff workforce in schools in England have grown in recent years, the number of teaching assistants has risen dramatically. Between 1997 and 2005 the number almost trebled — from 35,500 to just under 100,000. Over the same period, the number of special needs support staff doubled to 48,000. By comparison, the number of full time equivalent (FTE) 'regular' teachers in the maintained sector rose by just 4,000 to reach around 430,000 in January 2005. In the nursery and primary phase the number of FTE regular teachers actually went down by 200, to 196,000. (DfES, 2005. See appendix for full tables).

The growth in teaching assistant numbers has been accompanied by marked changes in the nature of their responsibilities. This has involved a shift in focus from purely 'care and housekeeping' towards greater involvement in the actual process of learning — including, for example, assisting with the assessment of pupils' learning.

The expansion of the number and role of teaching assistants is not an entirely new idea in England. The 1967 Plowden Report and 1975 Bullock Report urged that more profitable use be made of welfare assistants and ancillary help (Marland & Rutter, 2001). By the 1990s, concerns about teacher supply and teacher workload again highlighted the potential for making greater use of support staff. It was the literacy and numeracy Strategies that I noted earlier, however, that were the main driver for the first real expansion of teaching assistants and a widespread movement into learning support and even teaching-type roles in mainstream classrooms. This has since been cemented by workforce remodelling.

While the remodelling agenda has seen administrative roles reallocated from teachers to support staff it has also seen a 'reaffirmation' of the new role of teaching assistants. In particular, in 2004 the government established the Higher Level Teaching Assistant training and assessment programme, whereby teaching assistants can pursue Higher Level Teaching Assistant status. The government has taken the same approach to the training of teaching assistants as it has with teachers — setting out standards that must be evidenced. In this case there are thirty-one such standards to meet, many of which are not dissimilar to those for teachers.

The government has played an active role, then, in blurring the distinction between teachers and teaching assistants. Many of the teacher unions have accepted this, albeit with varying degrees of enthusiasm, as a means of helping teachers to focus on teaching rather than administration or behaviour control. The largest teachers' union — the National Union of Teachers (NUT)— however, refused to support the workload agreement. The union presented this in terms of the potential for declining standards where staff without a teaching qualification were left in charge of whole classes — which 'Higher Level' teaching assistants are indeed permitted to do.

The rejection of the agreement by the NUT could be seen as a very traditional

professional strategy of exclusion in defence of its members' interests. By contrast, the government argued that the agreement is part of a process in which different professional and professionalizing groups recognise their complementary roles in improving education in the interests of all (Morris, 2001).

Interestingly, there are parallel debates surrounding the modernisation of other public services. In a case study of nursing, for example, Gough (2000/01: 33) argues that empowering patients involves unpicking 'old style professionalism' and demands a new emphasis on 'how the patient can be best served through new ways of working — not shoring up old professional demarcations and engaging in endless turf wars'.

Linked to workforce remodelling in schools is an even broader 'Children's Agenda'. Legislation based on *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003) has sought to ensure multi-agency work in the interests of children and involve children and young people themselves in decision making. To support this policy, Local Authorities are being encouraged to bring together education and social services departments into powerful education and children's services departments and to establish 'Children's Trusts' to co-ordinate these services with other statutory and voluntary agencies.

This will bring far-reaching changes to the way in which different welfare services are configured, but also to the way both teaching and support staff work with other professionals. As part of this development, an 'extended schools' programme seeks to establish wider services in all primary and secondary schools — including study support and family learning opportunities and swift referral to a wider range of specialised support services. There are also plans for increasing the number of 'full service extended schools', which will offer local communities access to a range of courses and facilities, as well as services in childcare, youth justice, health and social care. This is something that has been tried successfully in Scotland and is seen as vital if the effects of social disadvantage on educational achievement are to be minimised.

At the same time, we have seen a greater emphasis on the voice of parents, with Local Authorities and Ofsted, the national inspection service, both seeking to give more attention to their interests. Ofsted, for example, will now be able to respond to concerns raised by parents themselves about their children's schools. Similarly, businesses have been increasingly encouraged to become involved in the education sector by part-funding and running anything from a local initiative to national programmes and individual schools (see Dickson et al, 2003).

In view of these developments, we would argue that, although the NUT's defensive, exclusory position is in some ways understandable — particularly in the face of government reforms that have undermined key elements of teachers' bargaining position — it is also likely to prove untenable and needs to be replaced with a more genuinely progressive strategy.

Implications for Teacher Autonomy and Control

Ironically, New Labour's one *direct intervention* in relation to teacher professionalism, early in its first term of office, may now be seen to have been somewhat out of line with subsequent policy developments. This direct intervention stemmed from a manifesto commitment at the 1997 general election that was intended to attract the support of teachers. As a result, the 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act created a General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) (and similar ones for Wales and Northern Ireland — Scotland had a

longstanding one).

The GTCE began work in 2000 to act as a voice for the teaching profession. Its official remit was to 'contribute to improving standards of teaching and the quality of learning, and to maintain and improve standards of professional conduct among teachers, in the interests of the public' (www.gtce.org.uk).

At the time, the establishment of the GTCE was seen by some as the turning point at which teaching in England had become a bone fide profession in terms of the traditional checklist of the characteristics of a profession that we referred to earlier, especially as it went on to develop its own code of professional conduct. However, insofar as the GTCE is based on a traditional model of professionalism — in particular, its exclusion from membership of non-teaching members of the school workforce and the limited representation of other stakeholders on its governing council — it is arguably somewhat at odds with the subsequent policy developments that we have just outlined. This may be one of the reasons why the GTCE has seemed to be sidelined by government in the more recent past, as New Labour seeks to incorporate teachers into a broader educational and social agenda.

The GTCE has certainly not yet had the impact or influence that its original advocates hoped it would. Ironically, it has not even proved particularly popular with teachers themselves or with some of their trade unions (Revell, 2005). Our own view is that it now faces a choice. It could become a backward looking, and potentially irrelevant, advocate of a traditional and ultimately undesirable (as well as unattainable) form of professionalism for teachers. Alternatively, it could support the development of a 'democratic professionalism' that many commentators see as a more desirable way forward for teacher professionalism and one that responds positively to legitimate contemporary concerns about education and social justice.

This does not necessarily mean adopting New Labour's managerialist approach to modernisation, which has so far been no more successful than traditional forms of teacher professionalism in combating social disadvantage at the same time as raising standards. Rather, it involves recognising that education is a collective endeavour which requires the building of alliances with other workers and progressive social movements to pursue broader social goals. Only this is likely to bring about the conditions in which all young people can realistically, in the GTCE's own words, 'access the best possible standards of learning and achievement'. Otherwise, the sort of professional advances it advocates may benefit the few rather than the many and may even exacerbate inequalities. After all, as Hargreaves (2003) points out, in many countries the benefits of creative learning communities tend to be available to teachers of the affluent, while prescribed programmes of teaching and learning are inflicted on the rest.

Of course, these tensions are not just being played out through the GTCE. Commentators within the education research community have often responded to the New Labour reforms with a call for what are in effect traditional models of teacher professionalism. While these sometimes include calls for the 'democratisation' of the profession, they do not amount to the sort of 'democratic professionalism' that we shall be advocating at the end of this paper. For example, although Leaton-Gray's (2006) conception of a more engaged professionalism properly entails fuller engagement of teachers with their professional associations, it ultimately looks rather too much like a traditional understanding of professionalism — with an emphasis on teachers working as an exclusive group in an attempt to exert greater influence over policy.

The main emphasis of many academic accounts of the impact of education reform on teacher professionalism has been on the process of centralised-decentralisation, growing performativity and the shift to standards-based teacher training, which they view as an unacceptable attack on teacher autonomy and teacher creativity, and see as transforming teachers from professionals to technicians (eg, Tomlinson, 2001).

Hall and Schulz (2003) identify several barriers that they regard as preventing the teaching workforce in England from conforming to the model of 'postmodern professionalism' set out by Goodson and Hargreaves (1996). They cite, for example, the erosion of teacher discretion through central prescription of curriculum content, teaching methods and values, and the erosion of teachers' commitment to care through the emphasis on cognitive over emotional development in centrally-defined performance indicators.

With regard to the changes to teacher education, the accusation is that the essentially 'technical rationalist' competence-based approach has resulted in the introduction of a model of 'teacher as curriculum deliverer' (Adams & Tulasiewicz, 1995). The concern is that under such an approach new teachers may not develop the ability to formulate their own personal constructions of pedagogy or to draft their own curricula. They may even be discouraged from deciding their own educational priorities in the light of their pupils' needs and practicing the art of teaching in a way that suits their temperaments and personalities and those of their pupils.

Furthermore, such commentators argue, this could be seen as moving in exactly the opposite direction to the approach that contemporary theorists suggest would allow teachers to work to greatest effect. Here they point to an important aspect of Goodson and Hargreaves' (1996) notion of postmodern professionalism, which emphasises how, under conditions of unavoidable and perpetual uncertainty, teachers must be able to exercise discretionary judgement (see, for example, Hall & Schulz, 2003).

For Sachs (2003), writing in the Australian context, but referring to cross-national trends in policy, the new professionalism that is being encouraged by governments gains its legitimacy through the promulgation of policies and the allocation of funds associated with those policies. The modern professional is seen as one who works efficiently and effectively in meeting the standardised criteria set for the accomplishment of students and teachers as well as contributing to the school's formal accountability processes. This is a form of professionalism, Sachs notes, which accepts that decisions about what to teach, how to teach and how to assess children are made at school and national level rather than by individual teachers themselves.

In discussing what he sees as the 'de-professionalisation' of teachers under New Labour, Furlong (2005) similarly focuses on a move away from seeing the individual teacher as an essential actor. However, we would argue that, sociologically, what we are seeing in interventions such as New Labour's in England is not necessarily an example of de-skilling or de-professionalisation, but an attempt at *re-professionalisation* — that is, the construction of a different type of professionalism, considered more appropriate to the times and to New Labour's political project.

If this is the case, there may be possibilities for pursuing other strategies of re-professionalisation. It may be that new 'prospective' identities could be constructed as an alternative both to an outmoded traditional professionalism and New Labour's version. It is surely not necessary to move from academic critique of recent reforms or important insights about postmodern professionalism to an argument that teachers' professional judgement,

whether individual or collective, should not be challenged and should take priority over that of other stakeholders. Indeed, to this extent, the alternative notions of teacher professionalism being promulgated by New Labour and similar governments elsewhere trade upon entirely legitimate concerns about who has the right to make decisions about public education in a democracy. While the particular managerialist answer to these concerns on the part of New Labour may well be unacceptable, even in terms of its own professed aims, we would like to see more attention given to the possibilities of new modes of collectivism, better suited to the needs of contemporary societies.

As Lawton argued many years ago, there are different levels of decision making in education and the further one gets from the individual encounter in the classroom, the more other stakeholders need to be involved (Lawton, 1980). But, even in the classroom, the active role of other adults and, indeed, students themselves will be important in the development of appropriate learning environments (Fielding and Rudduck, nd; Fielding, 1999). The capacity to collaborate with others, rather than merely instructing them, must surely be an important competence on the part of contemporary professional teachers. In England, the expanding role of teaching assistants is a case in point.

With regard to teacher education, despite our reservations about the nature of some of the competences and standards that have been specified for teachers in the past, and the way they have been compiled, we have never taken the view that they cannot encapsulate the requirements of a forward-looking professionalism. Even while working to the government-defined standards, many universities continue to promote a view of teacher professionalism in line with Goodson and Hargreaves' model — one which emphases discretionary judgement, engages with the moral and social purposes of schooling and embraces a commitment to the care of students, working collaboratively with all stakeholders, and continuous learning. The Modes of Teacher Education study in England and Wales (Furlong et al, 2000) showed that course leaders were able to defend extended notions of teacher professionality while still conforming to government policy.

As indicated earlier, even the officially specified competences and standards have now begun to modify the narrow technicist model of professionalism, initially in Northern Ireland but subsequently in England. Furthermore, the government's children's agenda will require a move away from purely cognitive targets for education and is likely to require some rebalancing of the standards and inclusion agendas. These are positive changes that should be welcomed and capitalised upon by teachers as expanding their role in partnership with others.

In the parallel example of nursing and related professions, Gough (2000/01: 33) pointedly suggests that, in an era of patient empowerment, 'enabling people around us to change is dependent on transforming ourselves first'. Advocates of a new style of professionalism within these occupations have themselves seen the managerial reforms associated with markets and consumerism as offering possibilities for partnership, collaboration and reflective practice more suited to contemporary conceptions of citizenship and democracy than are traditional modes of professionalism within the health service.

Towards a 'Democratic Professionalism'

As a result, unlike some of the critics we have cited, we believe it is possible to identify

some progressive possibilities within the contemporary reforms of governments like New Labour. The alternative to their 'managed' or 'managerial' professionalism is not a return to the forms of 'licensed autonomy' that existed in the past. Even though it is an exaggeration to suggest, as the New Right did, that the teaching profession persistently abused its professional mandate and pursued its own self-interest, traditional professionalism did not always operate in the broader public interest.

Johnson and Hallgarten (2002) have argued that members of the teaching profession in England need to move from being 'victims of change' to being 'agents of change'. But, if teachers are to respond positively to the challenges of contemporary social and educational change, they will need to move beyond traditional inward-looking models of professionalism. Instead, they will need to develop what has been called 'democratic professionalism', seen by Davies (1996: 673) as relevant to a 'changed policy context and as a solution to some problems of professional power long identified in the academic literature'.

A democratic professionalism seeks to demystify professional work and build alliances between teachers and excluded constituencies of students, parents and members of the community on whose behalf decisions have traditionally been made either by professions or the state (Apple, 1996). In the case of teachers, they would need to work actively with others committed to teaching for a just society (Gale & Densmore, 2000; 2003).

It thus encourages the development of collaborative cultures in the broadest sense, rather than exclusive ones. It certainly suggests that the teacher has a wider responsibility than the single classroom — including contributing to the school, the wider educational system, other students, as well as to the collective responsibilities of teachers themselves as a group. But it also involves a responsibility to the wider community and a recognition that sometimes the narrow concerns of the profession have to be subordinated to a broader social agenda.

Sachs' (2003) notion of the 'activist identity' goes some way towards recognising this. Her activist professional works collectively towards strategic ends, operates on the basis of developing networks and alliances between bureaucracies, unions, professional associations and community organisations. These alliances are not static, but form and are reformed around different issues and concerns. Activist professionals take responsibility for their own on-going professional learning, and work within communities of practice. These develop in larger contexts — historical, social, cultural, institutional (181, see also Sachs, 2001).

In our view, democratic professionalism and associated 'activist' identity require not merely much stronger professional associations but ones that are themselves prepared to work with a much more varied range of stakeholders. As indicated, in England, the nature of the professional body, the GTCE, modelled as it is on a traditional notion of professionalism, effectively subordinates the interests of other stakeholders in education.

If it is to have a role in shaping the future, the teaching workforce and its representative bodies, it must ask some fundamental questions about who has a legitimate right to be involved in defining teacher professionalism and to be represented under its auspices. It now needs to begin working with others to develop approaches to education that relate not only to the legitimate aspirations of the teaching workforce but also those of the wider school workforce and the wider society — and that must include those groups which have hitherto not been well-served either by the teaching profession or by the state.

This will not be easy, not least because recent policies have undermined both the morale of, and public trust in the teaching workforce. This, in turn, has limited the extent to which

teachers can engage authoritatively with other stakeholders. Nevertheless, in our view, teachers and their professional associations must work with others to grasp and help shape the progressive opportunities that are provided by policies such as those relating to workforce remodelling and the children's agenda.

Even if, as Leaton-Gray (2006) rightly argues, the restriction of teachers' professional autonomy by recent reforms has sometimes 'undermined teachers as educators and their pupils as learners', there are surely new forms of professional engagement that provide much greater hope of empowering teachers and pupils for a democratic future than that offered by the traditional model of professionalism.

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APPENDIX

SUPPORT STAFF IN MAINTAINED NURSERY, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS IN ENGLAND. FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS: JANUARY OF EACH YEAR

(thousand)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005(p)
Teaching assistants1									
Teaching assistants	35.5	38.8	39.3	45.3	55.6	57.3	73.2	84.1	96.8
Special needs support staff	24.5	26	29.5	32.4	37.7	46.7	46.8	46.9	48.1
Minority ethnic pupil support staff	1.2	1.5	1.5	2.1	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Total	61.3	66.3	70.3	79.8	95.8	106.4	122.4	133.4	147.4
Administrative staff									
Secretaries	27.6	28.5	29.1	30.2	30.6	25.6	24.7	28.6	28.3
Bursars	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.7	5	4.9	5.1	5.7	6.3
Other admin/clerical staff	7.5	7.3	7.7	8.3	10.7	19.3	20.8	20.2	24
Total	39.2	40.1	41.2	43.2	46.3	49.8	50.6	54.5	58.6
Technicians2,3									
Total	12.7	13.1	13.5	14.2	15	16.6	18	19.7	21.4
Other Support Staff									
Matrons/nurses/medical4	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.9
Child care staff5,6	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.2	0.4	1.7	2.9
Other education support7,8	18.7	19.7	22.1	23.1	27.4	39.3	32.3	32	34
Total	23.3	24.4	26.5	27.5	31.8	44.2	34.4	35.6	38.8
Total support staff	136.5	143.8	151.5	164.7	189	217	225.4	243.1	266.1
(total excluding nursery schools)	134.1	141.5	149	162.1	186.3	214.2	222.5	240.2	263.1

Source: Annual School Census

DfES (2005) School Workforce in England, January (provisional)

(p) provisional

1. Includes higher level teaching assistants, nursery nurses, nursery assistants, literacy and numeracy support staff and any other non-teaching staff regularly employed to support teachers in the classroom except for special needs and minority ethnic pupils support staff.

2. Includes laboratory assistants, design technology assistants, home economics and craft technicians and IT technicians.

3. Excludes technicians in nursery schools and pupil referral units.

4. Excludes matrons/nurses/medical staff in nursery schools and pupil referral units.

5. Due to a reporting problem at source in 2003, the number of child care staff was not recorded accurately by schools, resulting in child care staff being distributed across other support staff categories

6. Includes qualified and unqualified child care staff. In 2004 this category is applicable to special schools only excluding general hospital schools.

7. Includes librarians, welfare assistants, learning mentors employed at the school and any other non-teaching staff regularly employed at the school not covered in teaching assistants.

8. Includes technicians and matrons/nurses/medical staff in nursery schools and pupil referral units.

There may be a small undercount of support staff numbers in 2005. Totals may not appear equal to the sum of the component parts because of rounding.

TEACHERS IN SERVICE IN THE MAINTAINED SECTOR IN ENGLAND BY TYPE
OF CONTRACT FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS: JANUARY OF EACH YEAR

(thousand)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005(p)
Nursery and primary									
Qualified regular teachers	191	189	190	192	193	193	192	190	190.1
Full-time	176	174	174	175	175	174	172	169	167.1
Part-time	14.8	15	15.9	16.8	17.9	19.1	20.3	21.8	23
On secondment1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	.	.
In occasional service2	8.3	8.3	8.9	10.5	12	10.1	8.4	8	8.6
Overseas trained teachers and instructors without QTS	0.8	0.9	1	1.2	1.8	2.9	3.9	3.9	4.1
Teachers on employment based routes to QTS3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	1.3	1.6	2.3	2.3
Total teachers	200	198	200	204	207	208	206	205	205
All regular teachers4	192	190	191	193	195	197	197	197	196.4
Secondary									
Qualified regular teachers	188	188	190	191	194	197	198	201	203.8
Full-time	174	174	176	177	179	181	182	184	186.2
Part-time	13.4	13.8	14.1	14.5	14.6	15.3	15.7	16.7	17.5
On secondment1	-	-	-	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	.	.
In occasional service2	4.4	4	4.5	5.3	6.6	6.4	5.5	5.5	5.7
Overseas trained teachers and instructors without QTS	1.5	1.6	1.9	1.8	2.3	4.7	6.4	6.9	7.2
Teachers on employment based routes to QTS3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.6	1.9	2.5	3.6	3.8
Total teachers	194	194	196	199	203	210	212	217	220.4
All regular teachers4	189	190	192	193	197	203	207	211	214.7
Special schools									
Qualified regular teachers	14.7	14.3	14.2	14.1	14	13.9	13.6	13.8	13.3
Full-time	13.5	13.1	12.9	12.8	12.7	12.4	12.2	12.2	11.8
Part-time	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5
On secondment1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.	.
In occasional service2	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6
	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.8
Teachers on employment based routes to QTS3	-	-	-	-	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2
Total teachers	15.5	15.1	15	15	15.1	15	14.9	15.2	14.9
All regular teachers4	14.8	14.4	14.4	14.3	14.3	14.3	14.2	14.6	14.3
PRUs and education elsewhere									
Qualified regular teachers	3.2	3.5	3.9	4	4.2	4.7	4.9	5.2	6
Full-time	2.6	2.8	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.7	3.8	4.1	4.6
Part-time	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.1	1.3
On secondment1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.	.
In occasional service2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Overseas trained teachers and instructors without QTS	-	-	-	-	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
Teachers on employment based routes to QTS3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	...
Total teachers	3.5	3.7	4	4.1	4.5	5.1	5.3	5.7	6.5
All regular teachers4	3.2	3.6	3.9	4	4.2	4.8	5.1	5.5	6.2

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005(p)
									(thousand)
Total									
Qualified regular teachers	396	395	398	401	405	408	408	410	413.1
Full-time	366	364	366	367	370	371	370	369	369.7
Part-time	30	30.7	32	33.4	34.7	36.9	38.5	41.1	43.4
On secondment1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	.	.
In occasional service2	13.6	13.1	14.1	16.7	19.6	17.5	14.8	14.5	15.1
Overseas trained teachers and instructors without QTS	2.5	2.6	3.1	3.2	4.3	8.1	11	11.6	12.3
Teachers on employment based routes to QTS3	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.6	1.3	3.3	4.2	6	6.3
Total teachers	413	411	415	421	430	437	438	442	446.8
All regular teachers4	399	398	401	405	410	420	424	428	431.7

(p) provisional

1. Seconded for one term or more. Secondees collected as full or part-time teachers from 2004 onwards.

2. 2001 includes occasional teachers without QTS from outside the European Economic Area. Since 2002 all occasional

teachers without QTS are included.

3. Those on the Graduate Teacher Programme, the Registered Teachers Programme, the Overseas Trained Teachers Programme or the Teach First scheme.

4. Excludes occasional teachers.

Totals may not appear equal to the sum of the component parts because of rounding.