

Questions of professionalism:

Erosion and reclamation

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The term professionalism continues to be a disputed one. However, there is still widespread agreement on three of its distinguishing characteristics. Definitions of professionalism and the status of professionals cannot, however, be divorced from considerations of context. In the current climate, it can be argued that teacher professionalism is being eroded. This erosion can be mapped by considering the current state of a profession viz-à-viz six markers which can serve as indicators in the professionalization/deprofessionalization process. Faced with a deprofessionalization crisis, there are a number of ways a profession can react. One of these is the adoption of an "activist professional" agenda.

There is no question that teacher professionalism is a disputed topic and a contested term. Hoyle and John (1995) state bluntly that "*Profession* is an essentially contested concept. Despite its widespread use in the media and in the everyday discourse of those who would be readily regarded as professional people, and despite the best efforts of sociologists, philosophers and historians, it defies common agreement as to its meaning." (1) For all that, the term will not go away. Nor will the general acceptance that teaching is a profession. Since the term is not going to go away, it behoves us to make the best of it.

In this article, I begin by examining briefly ways in which the term *profession* (and related terms such as *professionalism* and *professionalization*) achieve definition. I go on to consider some of the contextual factors that have a bearing on the ways in which these terms are discussed. Then, having settled on a kind of benchmark definition of what professionalism can be deemed to be, I will discuss some of the ways in which the conditions required for such professionalism to be exercised can be eroded through a process of *deprofessionalization*. I will ask the question whether deprofessionalization has indeed been taking place and mention a number of indicators which suggest that it has and how this has been engineered. Finally, I will be examining a range of strategies for

resisting and arresting the process of deprofessionalization, including the strategy of developing a new concept of the professional teacher.

DEFINING PROFESSIONS AND PROFESSIONALISM

One way of defining a profession is to adopt what we might call an idealist approach, which posits an ideal for professional conduct or abstracts an ideal as a result of considering actual professions in action. (Hoyle, 1982, Downie, 1990) Such an approach, described by Hoyle and John (1995) as the "criterion approach", leads to a set of defining characteristics against which the conduct of a profession can be measured. Hoyle's (1982) functionalist approach, for example, defined a profession in terms of its central social function, its length of training, a body of knowledge, high levels of skill, a code of ethical conduct, client-centredness, autonomy, independent decision-making and adaptability, self-governance and the requirement that it play a central role in relevant public policy-making.

An idealist approach to definition is inclined to be ahistorical, essentialist and is conducive to a description of the related term *professionalization* as a process "...whereby an occupation increasingly meets the criteria attributed to a profession." (Hoyle, 1982, 161.) While there might be disagreement on the criteria, either because professions *needn't* be like this or in fact *don't* act like this, there is widespread agreement, according to Hoyle and John (1995), in respect of the criteria of knowledge, autonomy and responsibility. Both Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) and Sachs (1998) subscribe to a view of *classical democratic professionalism* as characterised by: expertise (the possession by an occupational group of exclusive knowledge and practice); altruism (an ethical concern by this group for its clients) and autonomy (the professional's need and right to exercise control over entry into, and subsequent practice within, that particular occupation.) (Sachs, 1998, 1)

A social constructivist approach to the question of definition views the profession as a relative concept susceptible to different constructions according to time, place and the discursive disposition of its advocates and critics. Such an approach is less concerned with generating an ideal against which conduct can be measured than identifying a range of historically bound descriptions, each with its own implications for professional practice.

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996), for example, in their analysis of the concept, identify five frequently overlapping discourses which suggest five *different* professionalisms: *classical*, *flexible*, *practical*, *extended* (related to the "new professionalism" to be discussed later in this article) and *complex*, each historically bound and susceptible to critique. In keeping with social constructivist approach to the problem of definition, they define *professionalization* as "a social and political project or mission designed to enhance the interests of an occupational group." (4) This emphasis on professions as interest groups and social contestation leads directly to considerations of social context.

ISSUES OF CONTEXT: DELIMITING PROFESSIONAL AUTHORITY AND DEFINITION

Questions of professionalism and professionalization cannot be separated from considerations of social context. Idealist professions tend to view professions as characterised by a stable set of criteria yet still operating in a social context as interest groups negotiating their role and status vis-à-vis other interest groups. As Hirst (1982) and others recognise, issues of social accountability have an inevitable bearing on questions of *autonomy* – one side of the classic triangle. There is always a tension between a profession (which instinctively leans towards the preservation of its own autonomy) and those groups *outside* the profession who would want to have their say (as educational stakeholders) in calling a profession to account (keeping it honest). Hirst (1982) argues that issues of control are crucial. For him, “The degree of detailed public control over any profession is...a matter for the society itself to decide,” (173) and questions pertaining to the general good that education should serve, its particular ends, aspects of educational organisation and resourcing are primarily outside the expertise of professionals and are matters of public policy.

To whom professions *should* be accountable. The profession itself? The body which through the process of registration has conferred their status in the first place – usually not a teachers’ association or union? The employer? Management? The client? The wider community? The state? How these questions are answered necessarily impacts upon the way professions negotiate the conditions under which they work.

As indicated earlier, a social constructivist approach views professions as context-bound and functioning in accordance with differing constructions of the concept in contexts where these constructions themselves are a contested ideological battleground. Much contemporary discussion of context begins with a particular process of globalisation and the social restructuring which has occurred in many countries as a result of the spread of neo-liberal economic ideology (variously called Thatcherism, New Right economics, economic rationalism, Rogernomics). (Lawn, 1990; Smith, 1992; Robertson, 1996; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Helsby & McCulloch, 1996; Sachs, 1998.) The context-profession connection that characterises these discussions might be set out as follows:

- A series of virtually irresistible global trends are having an enormous impact on the socio-political structures of individual nation states.
- As a result, many individual governments, in accordance with the agendas of transnational corporations and other agencies, have begun a programme of socio-economic restructuring.
- This restructuring is known under various names, for example, post-Fordism, described by Robertson (1996) as characterised by: a global regime of capital accumulation based upon the principle of flexibility as a result of intensified competition for diminishing markets; an increasingly flexible labour process centred in the principles of core, contracted and contingency labour and a new

set of production concepts based upon teamwork, self-management and multiple but basic skills; and modes of regulation which are in the main governed by the ideologies of the free-market, individualism and private charity. (37-38)

- In varying degrees, this socio-economic restructuring has impacted upon and even driven educational changes, especially the devolution of managerial responsibility and the centralisation and increased state intervention in curriculum and assessment.
- These educational changes have tended to redefine teacher professionalism, teacher accountability and teachers' work.

Viewing the context-profession relationship this way raises a different set of critical questions. Whose definition of professionalism should prevail? Whose interests and what purposes does this definition serve? Who sets the standards in terms of which a professional's practice is to be appraised? How do differing conceptions of professionalism impact upon the nature of teachers' work?

THE PROCESS OF EROSION

I want to assert that there is a place for both idealist and social constructivist approaches to questions of professions and professionalization. The former can be seen as providing a place to stand, a fixed benchmark (notwithstanding the challenges of relativism) or ideal type (Freidson, 1994) against which the status and conduct of a profession – and the erosion of professionalism – might be measured and compared at different points in time and place. The latter draws attention to the socially contextual nature of professions – the changing nature of their status, definition, work and behaviour. It demands a recognition that depending on one's discursive vantage-point, one woman's deprofessionalization may well be another man's professional enhancement (reprofessionalization). My own position is to agree with Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) that classical, democratic professionalism remains a useful benchmark against which the current state of health of a profession can be measured.

Before outlining a way of mapping the process of professional erosion, I want to use a military-sounding metaphor to suggest that there are a number of salients or markers a professional group desiring to defend its knowledge-base, autonomy and client-relationship might well have an interest in occupying. These include:

- i. Determining what constitutes relevant professional knowledge;
- ii. Determining what constitutes appropriate and desirable professional practice;
- iii. Establishing the goals, processes, content and conditions of training;
- iv. Defining desirable conditions of work and service (including remuneration);

- v. Establishing the processes of registration, standard-setting, monitoring, appraisal and discipline;
- vi. Determining the appropriate processes and avenues of association and relationship.

In terms of each of these salients, what might the deprofessionalized terrain look like?

i. Professional knowledge

Professional knowledge for teachers concerns what should be taught and *what needs to be known to teach it*. According to Hirst (1982), a teacher's professional authority rests on a body of understanding, judgement and skills constituting a domain of what he calls "discipline-refined common sense". "It is the product of experience, research and training in successive generations working within and modifying existing institutions in our society. To the extent that this domain is concerned with activities not engaged in by the public at large and that the understanding, judgment and skills involved are matters acquirable only in relation to those circumstances, they constitute a proper domain of professional expertise." (180) While, commentators such as Hoyle and John (1995) and Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) have mounted an ideological critique of teacherly claims to specialized knowledge on such grounds as self-aggrandizement and a misguided belief in scientific certainty, these misgivings are more temperings than a denial of the importance of the body of understanding, judgement and skills as Hirst defines it.

The crucial ground for contestation, of course, is curriculum. Helsby and McCulloch (1996) argue that issues of professionalism are inevitably connected to questions about "what counts as knowledge" in the curriculum and the assessment regimes which help shape it. (p. 56)

When the state, or some other powerful stakeholder, assumes the role of active participant in determining the shape, content and even detail of curriculum and assessment policy, there is risk of a conflict of interests with teachers and the prospect of professional erosion. What Derber (1982) terms a loss of *ideological autonomy* occurs when teachers lose control over the goals, objectives and policy directions of their work through a government's refusing to engage in genuine dialogue over such things as key administrative, organisational and curriculum changes. In particular, the likelihood of conflict might be seen as greater at secondary level, since most secondary teachers have been apprenticed in a traditional subject discipline.

ii. Professional practice

It is natural to think of the classroom as the preserve of the teaching profession, as its final "keep"! Here the professional is in control, drawing on a body of professional knowledge, exercising a range of skills and managing the learning of thirty or so students. In the hurly-burly world of this classroom, the teacher is engaged in a relentless

succession of judgment calls and responds to a multiplicity of student needs in a kaleidoscope of roles. Yet even here, where professional autonomy might expect to meet fewest impediments, the directives imposed centrally by other stakeholders can operate to affect and even dictate practice. These directives can include curriculum statements translated into school schemes which circumscribe content and reduce objectives to a set of "achievable" learning outcomes; assessment practices which dictate the frequency and type of assessment and shape reporting procedures; teaching and learning activity types, and strictures on how to conduct relationships with students (for example, "no touch" policies).

The more such directives accumulate, the less likely it is that teachers will experience themselves as autonomous practitioners. If Derber's loss of ideological autonomy leads to a shrinking of the teacher's field of intellectual action, then what he terms *technical proletarianization* leads to the loss of control over the skills, content, rhythm and pace of their work.

iii. The goals, processes, content and conditions of training

There are a number of contending stakeholders in respect of decision-making processes about the goals, processes, content and conditions of professional training and professional development for teachers.

- The state as principal funder wanting a say with regard to the goals a state-funded education system should serve and therefore the kinds of professionals that should be produced to make those systems work effectively;
- The community, through such organisations as school trustees associations;
- The tertiary education sector, especially via its qualification-granting and monitoring agencies;
- Teacher associations themselves, especially where these have something resembling a united voice and where they have a voice in deciding entry qualifications to the profession.

Where teachers lack a professional body to act as advocate and consultee in decision-making processes in respect of teacher training and professional development, they are in a weakened position as a profession and susceptible to having their body of knowledge challenged and eroded.

iv. Conditions of work and service

Unlike the majority of doctors and lawyers, most teachers are state employees. Consequently, the content of their employment contracts are a matter of negotiation with a state employer whose desire to keep the wage bill *down* is characteristically combined by a desire to push teaching standards *up*. Conditions of work include hours of work, remuneration, leave provisions, class sizes, extra-curricular responsibilities and meeting

requirements. Clearly some of these conditions are more susceptible to the demands of agencies and interest groups outside the profession than others. Those items which figure in teachers' employment contracts are clearly going to be affected by the nature of the bargaining process and the strength of the position of the bargain agent (usually a union) representing teachers relative to the power of the state. Specifically, a weakened union movement is going to weaken the ability of the profession to affect its remuneration and many of its conditions of service. This is particularly true in a "low-trust" environment, where the profession itself has been branded as self-interested.

Historically, teacher unions have had a dual focus. On the one hand, they have fulfilled the traditional role of a trade union, working in an advocacy role on behalf of members' interests in respect of remuneration and conditions of work. On the other hand, they have played an educational policy-making role as a professional association vis-à-vis the state and other stakeholders as a significant party in processes of consultation. In an environment where the state and teacher unions are committed to an ideal of partnership, unions may choose to temper their traditional advocacy and tactics with respect to pay and conditions as a trade-off in exchange for representation at the policy-making table. In an environment where the state opts to characterise teacher unions as untrustworthy, self-interested and resistant to their reform agendas, it may use this stereotype as an excuse for excluding teacher union representative from the policy-making table. In such an environment, teacher unions may find themselves constrained to engage in traditional trade union ways of behaving, despite a genuine desire to act otherwise as a respected professional association.

v. Registration, standard-setting, monitoring, appraisal and discipline

As Hirst (1982) and others have argued, the professional status of the teaching profession has been historically compromised by the *absence* of a professional body whose very *raison d'être* would be to establish, maintain and sometimes enforce those ethical standards and other standards of conduct the profession has established for itself. Traditionally, it is one of the hallmarks of a profession to establish such standards and to use them as a basis for managing entry to the profession (registration) and for monitoring the performance of the profession's members. Hirst points out that teachers have often been their own worst enemies in respect of their ability to participate in public debate on educational issues because of the inadequacy of their organisation. He and others (for example, Sullivan [1999]) argue that a well-organised professional body is indispensable for the proper functioning of professional authority, both individually and collectively. (p. 181)

While teachers have to accept major responsibility when such a body does not exist, it is clear that in a low-trust environment, where teachers have become portrayed as self-interested providers who have captured central policy-making processes, efforts to establish such a body are likely to be constrained by either passive or active resistance on

the part of the state. Indeed, in such an environment, one can anticipate a series of government moves to curb the autonomy of the teaching profession. The question of who sets professional standards is a clear indication as to a profession's status in relation to the state and the community the state ostensibly represents. In a relatively high-trust environment of what Apple (1998) calls "licensed autonomy", a profession itself can be expected to assume the function of standards-setting and monitoring. In a low-trust environment of "regulated autonomy" (Apple, 1998), one might see the state (through its agencies) setting professional standards for teachers, directing the monitoring process and instituting performance-related pay regimes. Clearly, where functions such as standards-setting, registration, qualifications endorsement and accreditation are assumed by another statutory body, the status of the teaching profession is weakened.

vi. Processes and avenues of association and relationship

As indicated earlier, professions take their place within a complex web of socially constructed associations and relationships. Some of these relationships are formalised; some are less formal. The former include special interest groups within the profession (for example, subject associations); bodies established by statute (for example, Boards of Trustees); site-based organisations (for example, Parent-Teacher Organisations); professional development providers and advisory services; groups and forums established as part of a process of state-initiated consultation. The latter include: informal associations with other members of the profession based in a common interest for such purposes as resource production and professional development; meetings with parents and other members of the community to address issues of a common concern; the day-to-day business of site-based, "lunchroom" talk; and semi-formalised meetings with other professional and community groups with a view to addressing issues of common concern.

In a society which ostensibly cherishes freedom of association, autonomy in respect of association and relationship should be easy to defend. However, professional autonomy is clearly going to be affected by the ways in which various interest groups align themselves vis-à-vis the state and its reform agendas. Teacher unions, for example, are likely to have their bargaining power enhanced where a Board of Trustees Association is sympathetic to its point of view on a particular issue.

It is also going to be affected by the kind of cohesion that persists in the various teacher associations themselves. Clearly the autonomy of teachers will be affected when teacher groups themselves align themselves compliantly, as a bargaining strategy for example, with state reform agendas despite membership disquiet. It is also affected when individual subject associations and advisory services, perhaps unwittingly, "choose" to work in a compliant way with these same reform agendas. And to mention the unmentionable, there is always a degree of self-interest at stake in a decision to go with the flow or resist it.

HAS EROSION OCCURRED?

Using classical professionalism as a benchmark, the preceding section has described a notional map of professional erosion – of a deprofessionalizing process that would pose a threat to teachers' body of knowledge, autonomy and the special nature of the client relationship. Has such a process actually occurred? A negative or affirmative answer to such a question depends to a large extent on one's concept of professionalism. Indeed, some commentators would argue that curriculum and assessment reforms associated with the late 1980s and 1990s have in fact *enhanced* teacher professionalism

Writing about the English and Welsh educational system, Helsby and McCulloch (1996) characterise the 40s as a time when it was generally accepted that the State was not actively involved in prescribing the detail of curriculum and the 60s as a time when "...high expectations of teacher autonomy with regard to the curriculum were generally maintained." In the mid-70s, a concerted attempt was mounted on the part of civil servants and politicians to displace the role of teachers in this regard, with the "crucial intervention" being Prime Minister James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech (October, 1976). The educational reforms under Thatcher in the 1980s and 1990s "...extended and consolidated this process of direct and active intervention on the part of the state," leading to the rise of the National Curriculum under the Education Reform Act of 1988." (57-8)

From one point of view, they write, "...the State...moved in on the classroom, hitherto regarded as the province of the teacher, with the effect of downgrading the teacher's role to that of merely implementing decisions reached elsewhere." (p. 59) Writing of the same context, Hargreaves and Goodson refer to the major decision-making areas of curriculum outcomes and testing requirements as having been arrogated to the centre ("we set the ends: you deliver the means") and to teachers and schools as being required to manage merely downloaded administrivia rather than issues of fundamental purpose and direction ("we control: you manage"). (p. 2)

Faced with the detail of what the reforms committed them to, the teaching profession in England and Wales voiced widespread dissatisfaction and disillusionment. Lawton (1993) reports English teachers as feeling increasingly deskilled and demoralised as a result of the national curriculum reforms affecting them. "No attempt was made to give them 'joint ownership' of either the curriculum or its assessment," even though most teachers behaved professionally and did their best with an unsatisfactory curriculum model. (p. 65) Helsby and McCulloch (1996), reporting on a study of all teachers of 14 to 18-year-olds in the English local education authorities, found only 37% of their sample who believed the curriculum changes were for the better. They write: "The introduction of a centralised and prescriptive National Curriculum appears to have weakened their professional confidence, lowered morale and left them uncertain both of their ability to cope and of their right to take major curriculum decisions. These findings are consistent with the view of increased State control of the curriculum undermining teacher professionalism." (p. 68) Galton, Hargreaves, Comber, Wall and Pell (1999) report similar disquiet among teachers in the upper years or primary school.

A similar broad history might be traced for both the Australian and New Zealand educational systems. Writing about the Australian context, Robertson (1996) refers to educational changes which have reduced teacher decision-making to a limited range of technical issues rather than big issues concerning what it is children should know and what it means to educate a critical citizenry. She refers to the changes as marginalising teachers' dissenting voices and reducing their scope for critical practice and autonomy. She concurs with Harris's description of the process of repoliticizing teachers " '...away from the broader concerns of determining curricula, formulating educational goals and promoting social reconstruction and towards the realm of efficient school management within an educational marketplace.' (1994, p. 4)." (42)

In the New Zealand context, distinguished educator Warwick Elley (1991) described the proposed reforms in curriculum and assessment as " ...unnecessary, expensive, conceptually muddled, technically flawed, uninformed by overseas experience, has an unrealistic time frame and is potentially counter-productive." History has shown that concerns such as Elley's were ignored. (Elley, 1996, Peters & Marshall, 1996). By way of example, the history of English in the New Zealand Curriculum from the time of its first draft in 1993 can be seen in terms of widespread acquiescence in respect of most of its content and an equally widespread rejection of its form. A report analysing submissions on the draft document, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*, concluded that there was minimal support for one of the main aspects of its form, the eight level structure. Among its recommendations, the report suggested that the linear, segregated structure of the matrix was inappropriate to language education and that the eight-level structure was not based on research. (Duthie, 1994) In its revision of the draft, the Ministry of Education ignored these concerns.

Such vignettes appear to belie the optimism of sociologists such as Freidson(1994) in respect of the ability of middle-class knowledge-based workers in post-industrial society to resist managerial authority and control over their specialised body of knowledge. A similar picture can be seen as emerging in respect of teachers' control of their actual teaching practice.

Given the relatively autonomous nature of teaching, writes Apple (1995), teachers have had some success in resisting technical and bureaucratic control, at least at the level of professional practice. But he suggests that this "relative autonomy" may be breaking down under the transformational pressure of the "logic and contradictions of dominant ideologies" implicit in curriculum and assessment reforms. (130) He points to two aspects of curriculum that need to be interrogated in discussing their discursive underpinnings and pedagogical and professional implications: *content*, in terms of what is missing as well as what is present and *form*, in terms of how the content (or formal culture) is organised. (1995: p.28)

Implicit in such a distinction, is the potential for a contradiction to be set up between the form and content of a curriculum document. Curriculum reforms in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, for example, have been characterised by a

determination to express the goals and objectives of various areas of learning in terms of a particular form -- specific learning outcomes stepped progressively through either eight (Australasia) or ten steps (England and Wales). While teachers in all of these countries, through subject-specific working parties, had input into the content of curriculum documents, the formal structure and the generalised relationship of curriculum and assessment was imposed from above. It may not be coincidental that the teachers in Helsby and McCulloch's (1996) research focused their discontent on curriculum structure more than subject content or pedagogy. (p. 62)

How might such a top-down process of curriculum development impact on classroom practice? Apple argues for a direct link between *curriculum form* and what he calls technical control over the work of teachers. He cites a combination of management systems, reductively based curricula, pre-specified teaching "competencies" other factors as reducing teacher control and leading to what he calls a separation of conception from execution. "The control of knowledge enables management to plan; ideally, the worker should merely carry these plans out to the specifications, and at the pace, set by people away from the actual point of production." (1995: p.130). Such technical control leads to "deskilling" or "proletarianization" of the teaching force because it not only erodes the body of professional knowledge which atrophies through under-use and a lack of development, but leads to a loss of control over the skills, content, rhythm and pace of teachers' work. In addition, this technical control (Apple, 1986; Robertson, 1996) is usually accompanied by "intensification" (work overload, no time for coffee, collegial talk or professional reading, and so on).

Hoyle and John (1995), in discussing Thatcherite attempts to curb the professional power of teachers, identified two strategies, centralisation and devolution. An example of the former which is particularly pertinent to teacher training in the English setting has been the creation of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE). The writers argue that the introduction of CATE criteria can be seen as undermining the knowledge base of the teaching profession, as can government initiatives to shift the site of teacher education from teacher training institutions to schools. A similar point is made by Hargreaves and Goodson (1996).

A concomitant of the curriculum and assessment reforms in England, Australia and New Zealand has been a programme of "reprofessionalisation" -- state-funded "professional development" linked to the "new professionalism" referred to earlier and discussed in the next section of this article -- aimed at ensuring a smooth (and one might add compliant) implementation of the new order of things. In the New Zealand setting, government-contracted trainers employed in this programme are generally referred to as "facilitators". Professional development in such a setting is characterised by an attention to ways of achieving means that are predetermined and non-negotiable. Teacher advisory services, where they are still going concerns, have had their programmes decided for them by the "new professional" agenda. And other professional development agendas, which might bring a more critical light to bear on the process of reform, are marginalised.

Apple (1998) writes of the neo-conservative drive in the United States to regulate teachers:

There has been a steadily growing change from 'licensed autonomy' to 'regulated autonomy' as teachers' work is more highly standardised, rationalised and 'policed' (Dale, 1989a). Under conditions of licensed autonomy, once teachers are given the appropriate professional certification they are basically free – within limits – to act in their classrooms according to their judgement. Such a regime is based on trust in 'professional discretion'. Under the growing conditions of regulated autonomy, teachers' actions are now subject to much greater scrutiny in terms of process and outcomes. Indeed, there are states in the US that have specified not only the content that teachers are to teach, but also have regulated the only appropriate methods of teaching. (p. 90)

All of the latter have occurred incrementally in the New Zealand educational system during the 1990s. The Education Act of 1989 extended the framework of performance management in schools and by 1997, performance management systems had become mandatory for all New Zealand schools. Over a period of time, teacher unions (weakened by the National Government's Employment Contracts Act) continually gave way in response to constant Government pressure to accept the concept of performance-related pay.

Efforts to establish a Teaching Council of Aotearoa in 1995 foundered from a lack of statutory authority and funding. In 1997, a Ministry of Education green paper (*Quality Teachers for Quality Learning*) called for the establishment of a professional body for teachers [my italics] which would have legislative backing and Government support. The Government, however, would have a major role in establishing this body which, while having a range of functions (including standards-setting, registration, qualifications endorsement and accreditation), would be charged with taking into account the interests of employers, government, teachers and the wider community. (Ministry of Education, 1997: p. 26). No mention was made of teacher autonomy. To date, this body has not been established. However, within six months of the publication of *Quality Teachers for Quality Learning*, it was the Government itself through the Ministry of Education which had taken on the role of standards-setter for teachers.

In 1997, Ministry-devised performance standards and performance pay were accepted by the NZEI (the union representing primary teachers) as a condition for pay parity with their secondary colleagues. In 1999, professional standards were added to the secondary teachers' collective employment contract as a measurement tool. All of these changes proceeded despite teacher union misgivings (see for example, NZEI, 1998). According to Sullivan (1999), the imposition of a set of professional standards by the Government was part of a ploy to reshape both the status of teachers and the work they do. "These standards assume that teaching is a technicist activity which relies on ticking boxes and then making quantitative statements about the contents of the boxes. The

standards are narrowly focused and imprecise, and ignore the heart of good teaching as embedded in teacher roles such as that of decision-making and creative innovator." (p. 151)

If the New Zealand situation is typical, the role of teacher unions and associations *viz-à-vis* curriculum and assessment reforms and teacher professionalism has been problematical. The New Zealand secondary teachers' union (the PPTA), for example, adopted a slogan of "modernisation" to signal its compliance with the Government's curriculum and assessment reform agenda as part of its bargaining strategy to protect hard-won work conditions. It was the agitation of members that precipitated the union, rather late in the day, to mount a critique of the assessment reforms associated with the development of a new National Qualifications Framework.

Likewise, New Zealand professional subject associations have had difficulty in addressing curriculum and assessment reform with anything remotely resembling a united voice. And in respect of a topic that is probably too delicate to research, there is evidence of careers being made or unmade on the basis of compliance or non-compliance with official policy directions. Robertson (1996) makes a telling point when she quotes Larson's observation that there are some groups in an occupational field who locate themselves in what he calls a "core region" and are thereby positioned as more expert than others. Certainly, in the New Zealand context, the "new professionalism" (see next section) has produced a breed of facilitators whose role has been to enlighten their colleagues on the desirability and palatability of the practices which the reforms have demanded.

THE MECHANISMS OF COMPLIANCE

Writing in 1973, Eliot Freidson (1994) wrote confidently that the knowledge-based work of the prototypical workers of post-industrial society was *not* amenable to the mechanization and rationalization by management which industrial production and commerce had undergone in a previous century. (p. 102) I am arguing here that such a process *has* to a degree occurred for teachers. How did this happen?

According to Robertson (1996), the state's determination to assert its control of curriculum and assessment came from a need, driven by the post-Fordist agenda, to align the schooling system with a new socio-economic milieu restructured according to neo-liberal principles. (Robertson, 1996) Certainly the rhetoric accompanying curriculum reform in England and Wales, Australia, New Zealand in the last twelve years has emphasised the desirability of this kind of alignment. In issuing a discussion document on the new national curriculum of New Zealand, for example, the Ministry of Education (1991) referred to "...a growing concern that the national curriculum has not responded rapidly enough to changes in society and the imperatives of the modern, competitive international economic environment" and a need "...to ensure that our academic standards are at least comparable with those of our main trading competitors." (p. 1)

According to Sachs (1998), recent state-wide education reforms in Australia promoting devolution and decentralisation have relied heavily on managerialist structures to ensure implementation and the compliance of a frequently resistant profession. According to Sachs, managerialism as an ideology makes two distinct claims: efficient management can solve any problem; practices which are appropriate for the conduct of private sector enterprises can also be applied to public sector services. Quoting Rees' (1993), she identifies three trends emerging from managerialism: the disempowering role of management consultants; management's preoccupation with control; and loss of morale of highly trained professionals who had previously been totally committed to their work and the organisation.

In a managerial form of governance (with devolution and decentralisation), teachers are placed in a much longer line of authority relationship for measurable outcomes through the principal, to the district/regional office to the central office. As a result of such changes, an alternative view of teacher professionalism has emerged. Sachs cites Brennan (1996: p. 22) as claiming that the corporate management model has redefined the professional as one "...who clearly meets corporate goals, set elsewhere, manages a range of students well and documents their achievement and problems for public accountability purposes. The criteria of the successful professional in this corporate model is of one who works efficiently and effectively in meeting the standardised criteria set for the accomplishment of both students and teachers, as well as contributing to the school's formal accountability processes." (p. 3)

Like Sachs, and also referring to the Australian context, Robertson (1996) refers to the introduction of a "new level of professionalism" as one of the regulatory tools acting to bring about teacher compliance with centrally initiated reforms. To which she adds "...implementation of a competency-based, outcome-oriented pedagogy which corresponds functionally to the world of work." (p. 39) According to Codd (1997), such a pedagogy is custom-built to support the increased prevalence of what he calls the "technocratic-reductionist" (as opposed to the professional-contextualist) view of the teacher.

An even greater challenge to the state, as it has moved to occupy centre-stage in initiating, centralising and controlling assessment reform, has been to bestow a guise of legitimacy on the process of manufacturing consent – to borrow an expression from Chomsky – both in the public at large and among teachers as an occupation. The discourse embedded in curriculum reform announcements such as the Achievement Initiative in New Zealand reveals a number of rhetorical strategies at work and partly explains the extent to which the reforms generated the degree of *consent* they did. Apple (1995) writes that the state...

...can legitimate its own activity by couching its discourse in language that is broad enough to be meaningful to each of what it perceives to be important constituencies, yet specific enough to give some practical answers to those who, like teachers, "require" it.

The fact that the form taken by these curricular systems is tightly controlled and more easily made "accountable", that it is usually individualized (an important ideological element in the culture of the new petty bourgeoisie), that it focuses on skills in a time of perceived crisis in the teaching of "basic skills", etc., nearly guarantees its acceptability to a wide array of classes and interest groups. (p. 137)

Looked at as a series of easily digestible soundbites, New Zealand's former National Government's Achievement Initiative sounds more like common sense than a branding exercise. Who would argue with a commitment to raising levels of achievement? Or the establishment of "clear achievement standards for all levels"? Or the development of national assessment procedures at key stages of schooling" so as to provide for the adequate monitoring of student progress? Only a carping educationalist would argue that such common sense is easier said than done and that a number of questions are being begged here.

In all countries where reform programmes were undertaken, it was not just the reforms themselves that were branded. In varying degrees, the public was softened up by campaigns of "teacher bashing" which, while varying in intensity, served the same function. Branding teachers as self-serving and resistant to change had a number of consequences. Teachers who questioned the reforms appeared to confirm the description that had been applied to them. Teachers who indicated a willingness to work with the changes were offered the promise of a newly constituted form of professionalism and enhanced status. It was a promise that wooed many teachers who became "reskilled" (learned to do new tasks) as part of nationwide programmes of state-sponsored teacher development.

As Apple (1986) has remarked poignantly and ironically,

The process of control, the increasing technicization and intensification of the teaching act, the proletarianization of their work -- all of this was an absent presence. It was misrecognized as a symbol of their increased *professionalism*.Becoming adept at grading all those tests and work-sheets quickly, deciding on which specific skill group to put a student in, learning how to "efficiently manage" the many different groups based on the tests, and more, all became important skills. As responsibility for designing one's own curricula and one's own teaching decreased, responsibility over technical and management concerns came to the fore.....Since the teachers thought of themselves as being more professional to the extent that they employed technical criteria and tests, they also basically accepted the longer hours and the intensification of their work that accompanied the program. (pp. 45-6)

The manufactured consent of these new, managerial professionals – this submission to "regulated autonomy" – can be explained by a strategy Dale (1989) terms "sense legitimation". Apple (1998) describes this strategy as "...rather than providing people with policies that meet the needs they have expressed, states and/or dominant groups attempt to *change the very meaning* of the sense of social need into something that is very

different." (p. 86) For as Robertson (1996) points out, teacher professionalism is always constituted within a discursive field of knowledge-power. For this reason, the words and concepts which define teachers' work can change and teachers can unwittingly find themselves suddenly repositioned as non-experts by other powerful interests. In such a scenario, rather than delivering enhanced professionalism, the state subtly transforms the meaning of professionalism and achieves the aim of redefining teachers' work without recourse to crude and direct forms of control.

For indeed, the promise of enhanced professionalism and/or professionalization (described by Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) as a "curious twist") has been part of the state-initiated reform rhetoric from the start. Robertson (1996) refers to the Australian educational reforms as "...liberally sprinkled with the promise of a new professionalism for teachers." (29) Indeed, some educationalists (Evans, 1997) are of a view that curriculum reforms *have* led to higher levels of professionalism and professionalism that had necessarily been required previously. And she quotes Hargreaves' (1994) contention that educational reforms since 1988 have generated a "new professionalism" which is more client-focused, and more disposed towards collegiality and collaboration.

However, a number of educationalists have queried both the agenda and the impact of this drive towards a state-sponsored "new professionalism". Smyth (1992) argues that "reflective teaching" has been hijacked and institutionalized by what he terms the "radical agenda" of proponents of educational reform driven by a neo-liberal economic agenda, and that the "new professionalism" is really a myth of teacher professionalism which hides the extent to which teachers are being controlled through the technical and physical structure of the labour process of their work. Similar arguments are made by Hargreaves and Goodson (1996), Robertson (1996) and Sachs (1997). Robertson writes: "There is little scope in the promise of professionalism to wrest a degree of autonomy because the crucial margin for determination -- that is ideological control -- has been unceremoniously split from teachers' work and placed in the firm hands of administrators, politicians and transnational capital." (p. 16)

RESISTANCE

It is tempting to talk about professions as if they consist of a neat set of like-minded members. Such a picture, of course, is a nonsense. On any issue, there is no guarantee that a profession will speak with one voice. (Indeed the existence of dissent and debate might be viewed as a characteristic of a profession.) And on some issues, there may be real divisions in the ranks. Complicating the situation is the question of discourse. If one subscribes to the view that at least in part the subjectivities of individuals are constructed out of prevailing discourses (ways of viewing the world and the reflections of these in language), then it follows that both division *and* unity within a profession are going to be contingent upon the extent to which members are operating in terms of commonly subscribed-to discursive frames. "Common sense" might be defined as the way the world seems or ought to be in terms of the discourse one is operating out of.

Because discourse is susceptible to language -- indeed *is* a linguistic construct -- then subtle changes in what constitutes "common sense" can have an insidious effect on individual subjects (and professionals are no exception). Because discourses are general, social phenomena, they are going to have an impact on members of professions at a less-than-conscious level. In this way, members of professions may find that their *thinking* about a range of issues is changed, simply because an alternative discourse (and language) becomes available to them through which to articulate these issues. If these alternative discourses are powerful enough, the process of erosion may have begun without those members having been alerted to it.

A first step towards addressing the erosion of professionalism, and particularly the erosion of legitimate if constrained autonomy, is a process somewhat akin to "consciousness raising", where members of a profession learn how to identify, explore and contest those agendas which are discursively framing them (in more ways than one). Some of the researchers referred to in this article have critiqued various versions of professionalism in the light of the educational reforms of the last fifteen years in order to identify their limitations and to come up with alternative visions or versions of professionalism which are better suited to the task of ideological critique.

In general, Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) find the five forms of professionalism they analyse in their article wanting because they don't adequately equip teachers with the tools to contest the agendas that are at work transforming the nature of their work. Their answer is to posit a form of professionalism they call *postmodern professionalism*, but which I would prefer to call *critical professionalism*. Similarly, Smyth (1992), after analysing a number of versions of what it means to be a reflective practitioner, turns to developing his own version, a "socially, culturally, and politically reflective approach", robust enough to challenge "...the taken-for-granted official ends towards which teaching is directed." (p. 294) He describes his approach as consisting of four stages: describing, informing, confronting and reconstructing. Teachers are guided towards a more critical professionalism by such questions as: What do my practices say about my assumptions, values, and beliefs about teaching? Where do these ideas come from? What views of power do they embody? Whose interests seem to be served by my practices? What acts to constrain my views of what is possible in teaching? (p. 299)

Once this process of critical consciousness-raising has occurred, members of a profession, if not the profession as a whole, can move into "resistance" mode. The process of resistance can take a number of forms: covert non-compliance, stubborn refusal, active contestation and the espousal of alternatives. The form of resistance will vary according to circumstances. However, as Apple (1995) has remarked, not all forms of resistance are going to enhance the life of the profession that finds itself under threat. "Resistances on one level may partially reproduce the lack of control on another." (p. 23)

An example of this paradox can be found in the resistance to the imposition of "Unit Standards" as a competence-based form of assessment in all post-compulsory education in New Zealand in the late Nineties. A major justification for this resistance, highlighted

especially by the secondary teachers' union (PPTA), was the increased teacher workload unit standards would produce. Couching resistance in terms of workload, however, diverted attention away from the serious pedagogical shortcomings of unit standards-based assessment methodology. Subsequently, when the Government moved to replace unit standards with what it has called "Achievement Standards" in 1998, it has tended to justify its shift in terms of sympathy with teacher workload concerns, even while many pedagogical concerns remain unaddressed. Such a stance is hardly surprising. A government or education ministry will always prefer to be seen as overly demanding that fundamentally misguided.

Reclaiming the profession and professionalism

A process of reclamation can be set in train, either when a profession becomes alerted that it is under threat, or when the process of professional erosion is already advanced. To be successful, this process of reclamation requires: a degree of common understanding among the profession's members as to what professionalism means; a shared set of demands; a shared set of strategies; and a network of associations that is conducive to the profession's being successful in attaining its goals. Underlying all of these is the need for public sympathy and trust conducive to the sort of moral legitimacy which, as Hirst (1982) and Downie (1990) have pointed out, can only be achieved when a profession is serious about extending its knowledge-base and the professional development of its members.

Australian academic, Judyth Sachs (1997, 1998) has coined the term "activist professionalism" to describe a form of professionalism which appears tailor-made for the project of reclamation. For Sachs, reclaiming teacher professionalism "...requires a recasting of professional and industrial issues and relationships between employers, unions and teachers and other education stakeholders." (1997: p. 264) She views activist professionalism as characterised by:

- "active trust"...which involves the negotiation of shared sets of values, principles and strategies between a number of sectional interests in "new kinds of social and professional relationships." These relationships involve new forms of collaboration between various groups, and
- "generative politics": which "...allows individuals and groups to make things happen rather than to have things happen to them in the context of overall social concerns and goals." (1998: p.7)

Sachs' notion of activist professionalism bears more than a passing resemblance to Hoyle's model of "extended professionalism" over 20 years previously (1974), especially in its emphasis on proactively positioning teachers to play an active role in public policy debate. Like Sachs' activist professional, Hoyle's extended professional puts a value on professional collaboration, engages in collegial reflective practices, is involved in non-teaching professional activities and engages in a considerable amount of in-service

development which addresses theoretical issues as well as matters of classroom practice. Where Sachs differs from Hoyle is in the extent of the collaborative networks her concept of activist professionalism envisages. Moreover, her model has arisen from the crucible of recent educational reforms and is thus more discursively canny than Hoyle's.

An example of activist professionalism can be found in the establishment of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the United States in 1987 as an independent body representing a broad political spectrum driven by the need "...to find an alternative education reform strategy to the damaging deprofessionalising policies that had emerged from *A Nation at Risk* (1983)." (Ingvarson, 1998, 34) The development of the NBPTS in the United States showed teachers and other educational stakeholders collaborating to reclaim an important aspect of their professionalism from the regulatory drive of federal and state governments. A similar move with respect to standards-setting is under way in Australia, in response to the report of the Senate Inquiry into the Status of Teaching (1998), *A Class Act*, which called for the development of national professional standards and a registration body to have the responsibility, authority and resources to develop and maintain standards of professional practice. (Ingvarson, 1998, 32) The professional body has yet to be established, but teachers and other educationalists, via the SPIRT project (funded by the Australian Research Council) have begun developing professional standards in English, Mathematics and Science. (Gill, 1999; Doecke & Gill, 2001).

A final example, closer to this writer's New Zealand home, is the English Study Design project, a project which developed, implemented, trialled and evaluated a senior secondary English programme as a model of curriculum implementation and standards-based system. The project, involving staff from universities and secondary school English departments nationwide working collaboratively, has effectively contested the theoretical ground upon which the New Zealand National Qualifications Framework and its unit standards methodology was erected and is continuing to contest the latest Ministry of Education development of yet another qualifications framework, viewed by many commentators as unsound as its predecessor. That story is still being told. (Locke and Hall, 1998)

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