

## **‘Collaborative’ and ‘Democratic’ Professionalisms: Alternatives to ‘Traditional’ and ‘Managerialist’ Approaches to Teacher Autonomy?**

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*This paper considers four notions of teacher professionalism - traditional, managerial, collaborative and democratic professionalism. While its focus is on England, the increasing convergence of education policy around the world means that its discussion and arguments have much wider relevance. The paper begins by outlining the different sociological approaches to defining professionalism, but highlights how, in practice, in most countries the characteristics of a profession are now determined to a large extent by the state. It goes on to document the policy developments that have challenged the traditional professionalism in place in England from the 1950s until the mid-1970s to establish a new managerial professionalism. These developments are linked to the ‘New Right’ concern from the 1980s to reform the public sector through marketisation and increased surveillance by the state, but the paper also notes the need to acknowledge separate from this the failure of teachers to deliver what society required of them under traditional professionalism. Rather than seek a return to these ways of working, the paper suggests that teachers should take the opportunities opened up by the Conservative and New Labour reforms of the last two decades to move towards a collaborative professionalism. Such professionalism would entail closer working between teachers and other members of the school workforce, such as teaching assistants, as well as professionals from other services concerned with children and young people. The paper concludes, however, that the education community should not be content with collaborative professionalism, but seek to move towards a democratic professionalism, which would entail working not only with other professional groups, but other stakeholders as well - including business, parents and pupils. This means being sensitive to a wide range of stakeholders, some of whose voices have traditionally been silent in education decision making.*

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## 1 Introduction

Definitions of professionalism vary across time and place. The standing of teachers and the history of teaching as an occupation differ considerably between England and East Asia (see, for example, Cheng & Wong 1996; Morris & Williamson 2000). Nevertheless, there are some increasing similarities between the education reforms being introduced in different parts of the world and it may well be that we can learn from each others' approaches to, and understandings of, teacher professionalism. In doing so, we need to explore both the nature of, and the limits to, teacher autonomy.

Helsby and McCulloch (1996) pointed to the centrality of the classroom context in teachers' traditional claims to autonomy, arguing that:

...issues of curriculum control refer to teachers' rights and obligations to determine their own tasks in the classroom - that is, to the way in which teachers develop, negotiate, use and control their own knowledge - and are therefore central to teacher professionalism (56).

Many years earlier, Lawton, a former Director of the Institute of Education, similarly took the view that, in the classroom, the individual teacher's professional expertise and judgement should generally prevail (Lawton 1980). However, the further one got away from the individual encounter in the classroom, he argued, the more other stakeholders needed to be involved in decision making. Thus, Lawton recognised that the claim of the profession to determine what counts as knowledge in the curriculum should be set alongside the rights of other stakeholders, including the elected government of the day.

More recent thinking has placed even greater emphasis on the role of other stakeholders, even within the classroom. It suggests, for example, that the active role of other adults such as parents and teaching assistants - and students themselves - is equally important in the development of appropriate learning environments (see, for example, Fielding 1999). In England, this has become a key theme of education policy under New Labour - albeit as a reflection of the neo-liberal concern to restrict the voice of the teacher, rather than as an outright championing of other stakeholders as is the case in the literature on education and social justice.

This has certainly not led to a diminishing role for central government. Indeed, recent trends in decision making beyond the classroom have often restricted the extent to which teachers - and the other stakeholders just mentioned - have discretion. Furlong (2005) notes how in England the New Labour government has established an alternative and increasingly dominant form of 'managerial professionalism', one which '...accepts that decisions about what to teach, how to teach and how to assess students are made at school and national level rather than by individual teachers themselves' (120). As Dainton (2005) concurs, New Labour's prescription, based in a '...quest for one-size-fits-all "what works" solutions...' has played '...a powerful role in marginalising rather than amplifying teachers' voices' (160).

While these analyses are welcome, it is notable that they do not acknowledge how recent policy changes can be seen to be based, at least in part, in a perceived failure on the part of teachers to deliver what society required of them - arguably a failure of traditional professionalism. This view is reflected in the 'official' account of recent reform offered by Michael Barber, the key architect of New Labour's policies in England (eg, Barber 2005). He argues that there have been four

phases of reform since the 1960s, as follows:

- *Uninformed professionalism* - the period prior to the 1980s, often regarded as the golden age of teacher autonomy but when, according to Barber, teachers lacked appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes for a modern society
- *Uninformed prescription* - the period following the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1979 and, in particular, its imposition of a National Curriculum in 1988 for political rather than educational reasons
- *Informed prescription* - the period following the election of Tony Blair's New Labour government in 1997, bringing with it (in Barber's view) 'evidence-based' policies such as the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Standards-based teacher training
- *Informed professionalism* - a new phase, just beginning, when teachers will have appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes so that the government can grant them a greater degree of licensed autonomy to manage their own affairs.

This account is itself not without difficulties. As Dainton (2005) rightly points out, it provides a crude analysis that is historically inaccurate. She also wryly comments that "delivering" someone else's thoughts, ideas, strategies and lesson plans hardly counts as "informed professionalism" (159).

In response, however, we suggest in this paper that, while New Labour's managerialist reforms have so far failed to create the conditions for 'informed professionalism', let alone the positive equity outcomes that their advocates predicted, they have contained some 'progressive moments'. These will need to be held onto as we seek to develop new forms of professionalism that transcend both traditional professionalism and the attacks on that tradition implicit in recent reforms. We therefore interrogate these reforms with a view to establishing the possibilities for 'collaborative' and 'democratic' professionalisms. The distinction between these two emergent professionalisms has been developed subsequent to an earlier analysis published in a Japanese journal (Whitty and Wisby 2006) and produces a fourfold typology of teacher professionalisms - traditional, managerialist, collaborative and democratic.

## 2 Approaches to defining 'professionalism'

We begin by looking at approaches to defining 'professionalism'. 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 initially subjected to concerted attention by western sociologists 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. Potentially, it also liberates us to conceptualise and work towards alternative conceptions of professionalism. Thus, it allows us to consider what might be appropriate 'prospective identities' for teachers in the current conjuncture (Bernstein 1996).

In practice, of course, in most countries the characteristics of a profession have been increasingly determined by the state, which became the major stakeholder in defining professionalism in the twentieth century. Most professionals are now 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.

The extent to which national governments have been willing to intervene in teachers' work more directly - whether by prescribing the school curriculum and national systems of examination or, for example, through inspection - 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. On the other hand, 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 many countries is a re-articulation of centralised policies with market-based ones to produce 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).

### **3 The New Right attack on traditional professionalism**

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 had 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. 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. 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.

In England, the so-called 'liberal educational establishment', principally comprising teachers, the local 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. 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 profile of schools' intakes - 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).

In England, the Conservative government's 1988 Education Reform Act has often been seen as the epitome of a policy combining market forces and state control. The Act was not only significant in 'stepping-up' the process of marketisation; it was both substantive and symbolic in centralising power. This included granting 451 new powers directly to the Secretary of State for Education. It also included one of the most significant examples of centralisation under the Conservatives - the introduction of the National Curriculum and its associated national system of assessment.

The National Curriculum specified programmes of study and attainment targets for three 'core' subjects, English, mathematics and science (plus Welsh in Wales), and seven other 'foundation' subjects. This was intended to ensure that all students aged 5-16 followed a 'broad and balanced' curriculum. The curriculum was to be assessed by a complex system of national testing for pupils at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16. Whereas previously the content of lessons was largely, if not whol-

ly determined by individual schools or teachers, now it was a statutory requirement for teachers to follow the centrally-prescribed curriculum. The national assessments generated a wealth of important data on school performance, thereby reinforcing the significance of the National Curriculum in shaping what teachers taught.

The developments we have outlined for England have obvious implications for teacher autonomy 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, while apparently ceding more power to managers at school, processes of 'steering at a distance' severely delimit and direct what and how they manage. Nevertheless, 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. There appears to be an increasingly marked divide amongst teachers along the lines of what might be summarised as the 'new entrepreneurs' and 'old collectivists'. 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 compounded this divide.

#### **4 New Labour's managerial professionalism**

This managerialism was taken to new heights by the New Labour government elected in 1997. Despite its proclaimed commitment to a 'Third Way', in practice its education reforms built on Margaret Thatcher's 'New Right settlement' and even went beyond it - combining devolution, choice and even privatisation, on the one hand, and centralised regulation, monitoring and even pedagogical prescription on the other.

As part of this, however, the basic policy framework of 'quasi markets' has been harnessed to a much more explicit attempt to re-conceptualise and control teacher professionalism in accordance with New Labour's political project. While the Conservatives attempted to reduce the power of the teaching profession relative to other stakeholders, it still saw the individual teacher as the means of raising standards in schools. Under New Labour there has instead been a growing focus on education as a collective endeavour.

New Labour's 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' (14). It goes on to list what, in the government's view, a modern teaching profession needs. This includes the call for teachers to:

- accept accountability
- seek to base decisions on evidence of what works in schools

- work in partnership with other staff in schools
- welcome the contribution that parents, business and others outside a school can make to its success.

There has thus 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 that of France and, indeed, Japan.

The 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. The Strategies have brought considerable funding for research and the production of classroom materials. Delivery has been standardised through prescribed content and training that promotes particular teaching approaches. This has been complemented by ambitious targets and a significant programme of pupil assessment to monitor achievement and the extent to which all pupils are reaching given levels of literacy and numeracy.

But the Strategies have had even wider implications for teachers in terms of the third element of the Green Paper - the need for teachers to work in partnership with other staff in schools, whose numbers have grown dramatically in recent years. Between 1997 and 2005 the number of teaching assistants in schools almost trebled - from 35,000 to just below 100,000. Over the same period the number of full time equivalent (FTE) 'regular' teachers in the maintained sector reached 430,000. In the nursery and primary phases the number of FTE regular teachers actually dropped by 200, to 196,000 (DfES 2005).

There have also been marked changes in the nature of teaching assistants' responsibilities - with a shift in focus from 'care and housekeeping' to involvement in the actual process of learning and assessment of learning. Although the expansion of the number and role of teaching assistants is not a new idea in England (see Marland & Rutter 2001), the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies were the main driver for change and the move of teaching assistants into learning support and teaching-type roles in mainstream classrooms. This has since been cemented by New Labour's workforce remodelling agenda.

One component of workforce remodelling has been the reallocation of various administrative and clerical duties from teachers to teaching assistants. This includes taking registers and low-level learning-related activities such as putting up displays, photocopying, record-keeping and invigilating. This role is obviously set below that of a teacher and implies working mainly under the supervision or guidance of the teacher.

Another component, however, has served to formalise a much expanded role for more experienced support staff. The Higher Level Teaching Assistant training and assessment programme, established in 2004, allowed teaching assistants to pursue 'higher level' status (see TTA 2003). The role requires a trained person who carries out a range of tasks traditionally associated with teaching, including teaching classes under supervision. These teaching assistants still report to the teach-

er, but operate with a substantial degree of independence and creativity in their own right. They are clearly full participants in the processes of learning and teaching, and in the skills that underpin them, such as planning and evaluating pupils' progress (Kerry 2005). This represents an important philosophical shift, namely that teachers' professional training, knowledge and experience prepare them to take overall responsibility for pupils' learning, but that they are not required to take sole responsibility for every aspect of each lesson that is taught (TTA 2003: 4, cit in Kerry 2005).

In this respect, the government has played an active role in blurring the distinction between teachers and teaching assistants. Many of the teachers' 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 policy. The Union expressed concerns about declining standards where staff without a teaching qualification were left in charge of whole classes. So strong was its opposition, the Union put full-page adverts in a national newspaper in an attempt to repel the initiative.

This rejection of the policy by the NUT could be seen as a very traditional professional strategy of exclusion in defence of its members' interests against New Labour's managerialist or 'managed' approach to teacher professionalism. By contrast, the government presented the changes as being part of a process in which different professional and professionalising groups recognise their complementary roles in improving education in the interests of all (Morris 2001). 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. This is particularly so if we look at other policy developments under New Labour.

For example, linked to workforce remodelling in schools is an even broader 'children's agenda', which encompasses the most radical changes in services for children and their families since the 1988 Children's Act (Reid 2005). The central plank of this legislation - the 2004 Children Act - is based in a Green Paper entitled *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2003). This requires schools to achieve five outcomes for all children, whatever their backgrounds and circumstances. These are to 'be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being'.

To support these aims, the Act seeks to ensure multi-agency working in the interests of children. Accordingly, 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 wide-ranging changes to the way in which different welfare services are configured, but also to the way both teaching and support staff work together and with other professionals.

## **5 Collaborative professionalism**

As family, community and children's welfare move alongside the traditional aims of education, schools will increasingly be involved in multi-agency working. As part of this, an 'extended schools' programme seeks to establish wider services in all primary and secondary schools - in-

cluding study support and family learning opportunities and swift referral to a range of specialised support. There are also plans for increasing the number of 'full service extended schools', which will offer local communities access to 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.

Such outcomes, and the inter- and multi-agency working that their realisation is likely to entail, obviously have significant implications for future professional training and continuing professional development needs. This will involve teachers working not as a largely separate professional group, but in active collaboration with other professionals, para-professionals and non-professionals from a range of possible disciplines. These include, among others, health visitors, general practitioners, social workers, education welfare officers, youth and community workers, education psychologists, speech and language therapists, learning mentors, the police and various local authority officers, as well as school support staff (see Reid 2005).

Such moves will entail considerable cultural shifts on the parts of all the groups concerned. So far, it is still unclear how such teams will work together - or how the teaching profession specifically will choose to position itself within them. Some recent reflections on the part of Carol Adams, the first Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE), illustrate the dilemma. While Adams herself welcomes many aspects of the children's agenda, she remains concerned that pupils, parents and the wider community could become confused about the unique contribution of the teacher. She also asks whether a child's right to learn could be threatened by the new multi-disciplinary agenda. In resisting the possibility that schools might become 'glorified social centres', she argues that we 'must hold fast to the simple premise that a school is a centre of learning' (Adams 2005).

This idea resonates with other critiques of recent education reforms as likely to 'de-professionalise' teachers (eg, Adams & Tulasiewicz 1995; Tomlinson 2001; Furlong 2005). However, we would argue that, sociologically, it is not necessarily appropriate to view such developments as an example of de-professionalisation, but rather as an attempt at *re*-professionalisation - that is, the construction of a different type of professionalism, perhaps more appropriate to contemporary needs. Yet, even those commentators who move beyond critique to argue that teachers need to develop a more active and engaged professionalism and overcome traditional divisions within the teaching profession (eg Dainton 2005; Leaton-Gray 2006) do not go on to consider whether the boundaries between teacher professionalism and the professionalisms of other occupational groups themselves need to be questioned.

In our view, embracing collaborative professionalism is far preferable to seeking a return to traditional professionalism. Even though, in England, it has been initiated by managerialist reforms, it potentially offers teachers new professional opportunities to support children's learning by achieving a balance between defining the teacher's proper role and staking out the territory too rigidly. Identifying the contribution of teachers' specific expertise remains important, but this will need to be deployed and disseminated differently in collaborative contexts.

That said, our concern should not be merely to facilitate inter-professional working between distinct groups working in education or other services concerned with children and young people. Although teachers' organisations are now talking to organisations representing social workers, school nurses, health visitors and police officers about common aims, the case for common codes of conduct or statements of shared values and about shared training, this seems to be as much about

staking out the territory for each profession more clearly, and thereby avoiding inter-professional rivalry, as it is about changing teachers' conventional ways of working in response to the new agenda.

While, as we have seen, some contemporary sociologists (eg, Hanlon 1998) have been content simply to move beyond normative understandings of what it means to be a professional, others, particularly those working in a feminist perspective, have taken a more directly critical stance. For example, Davies (1995; 1996) regards the 'old professions' as characterised by elitism, paternalism, control and detachment. This sociological critique of professionalism could equally apply to inter-professional agreements, where professions work with one another, but to the exclusion of other stakeholders.

We need to remember that part of the influence of the New Right reforms came from their appeal to voices within the wider community, including business and parents. Similar concerns informed one of the key principles of the 1998 New Labour Green Paper, which welcomed 'the contribution that parents, business and others outside a school can make to its success'. All this suggests that we may need to move beyond even the collaborative form of professionalism and seek to establish what we and others have termed 'democratic professionalism' - a professionalism where teachers work in tandem with *all* relevant stakeholders (Whitty 2002).

## 6 Towards a democratic professionalism

Democratic professionalism, then, involves being sensitive to a wide range of stakeholders, some of whose voices have traditionally been silent in education decision making (Apple 1996). It seeks to demystify professional work and build alliances between teachers and excluded constituencies of students, parents and members of the wider community.

Here too, it is possible to see that, ironically, the managerialist attack on traditional modes of teacher professionalism has opened up new possibilities. For example, in commenting on the increasing recognition of the importance of 'student voice' in school decision-making, Fielding (2004) notes:

...perhaps to our surprise, two decades of profoundly damaging policies and practices have also seen the emergence of apparently positive developments in what has come to be known as pupil or 'student voice'. As much as any development in schools in the last ten years, this 'new wave' of student voice activity seems to hold out real hope both for renewal and for the development of pre-figurative democratic practice that give teachers and students the courage and the confidence to create new practices and proposals for a more just and vibrant society (198-9).

Similarly, the growing influence of parents and business in schools potentially legitimates the involvement of other traditionally excluded constituencies in the wider community. In our view, democratic professionalism requires not merely much stronger professional associations, whether of teachers or even the wider children's workforce, but much more active engagement with a wide range of stakeholders committed to a just society (Gale & Densmore 2000; 2003).

Sachs' (2003) notion of the 'activist identity' for teachers 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, which develop in larger contexts - historical, social, cultural, institutional (Sachs 2001).

This requires teachers to conceive of themselves as 'agents of change' rather than 'victims of change' (Johnson and Hallgarten 2002). This will not be easy in England, not least because recent policies have undermined both the morale of, and public trust in the teaching workforce — which, in turn, has limited the extent to which teachers can engage authoritatively with other stakeholders. Nevertheless, if they are committed to fostering social justice, teachers and their professional associations will need to work with others to grasp and help shape the progressive opportunities that are provided by policies such as those relating to workforce re-modelling and the children's agenda.

Leaton-Gray (2006) rightly argues that the restriction of teachers' professional autonomy by recent managerialist reforms has sometimes 'undermined teachers as educators and their pupils as learners' (178). However, there are surely new forms of professional engagement and new professional identities that provide much greater hope of empowering teachers and pupils for a democratic future than that offered by traditional notions of teacher autonomy and a traditional model of professionalism. Both collaborative and democratic professionalisms are potentially progressive modes of professionalism that could still emerge from recent education reforms.

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