

The Implications of Performance Management for Teacher Professionalism

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In the UK over the past twenty years, notions of teacher professionalism have shifted in response to a series of changes to teachers' work processes wrought by successive governments. Increasing emphasis on accountability, curriculum prescription and performance indicators has diminished teacher autonomy and eroded personal responsibility for professional development. It is argued in the paper that the current Performance Management agenda legitimates this erosion through the rhetoric of raising standards.

CURRENT POLICIES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A MANAGERIAL APPROACH?

The government launched a major review of professional development in February 2000 that seeks to 'transform educational standards and raise achievement in every school' (DFEE 2000a, 3). It is predicated on ten principles; these include a need for teachers to take ownership of their development, to 'learn on the job' from expert practitioners, to harness the potential of ICT and to plan and evaluate their development programmes. The government pledges a commitment to fund and support teachers' professional development through a culture of entitlement. Fundamentally the goal is to raise standards of pupil achievement. The parameters for this are the individual teacher's needs and aspirations, the needs and priorities of individual schools and national strategic priorities.

The government has as its frame of reference for this professional development the sets of national standards it has laid down for teacher competence at various stages of their career. The emphasis is on individual teachers charting their way through the stages and phases of this framework of standards. The model thus embraces responsibility for NQT induction and individual career development within an increasingly diverse set of progression routes and management of teacher performance.

Teacher education is increasingly conceptualised within an extended framework from initial training, through induction to the NQT year and

beyond into qualified teacher status. Routes through to subject leadership and beyond are now formalised with Standards existing for Subject Leaders, Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and Head Teachers. The effect of the government's plans on performance management (see below) will be to create a plethora of routes to promotion and a diversification of remuneration for teachers. Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs) will be eligible to earn up to £40,000. The grade has been created to provide a career path for the best classroom teachers who do not want to move into a management post. ASTs are not intended to have management responsibilities over and above those of classroom teachers.

There is also a plan to create a 'fast track' through the profession to early subject leadership, pastoral roles and on to headship. The programme is intended to 'identify and reward existing teachers with the greatest ambition and potential, and will bring into teaching most of the brightest and best graduates and career changers. It focuses on the rapid development of professional excellence in the classroom as well as school leadership' (DFES 2001, 3). This route requires a commitment to extra training, but, carries with it greater opportunities (DFEE 1999a). Top quality graduates and 'the most talented serving teachers' will be selected for their commitment to teaching, excellent subject knowledge, talent to communicate, inspire and to lead. Fast track teachers will move through a number of designated challenging teaching posts to gain a range of varied experience. They will undertake extra CPD activities out of school hours and during school holidays such as short placements outside teaching, study for additional higher-level qualifications and courses offered by the new leadership college. They can reach the performance threshold within five years and progress to Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) status or a leadership post shortly after.

Thus for those who want to craft a career through to subject or key stage leadership and beyond there will be a structure to guide them, clear professional development opportunities and courses and an expectation that learning will be recorded through portfolio building and validated possibly through further qualifications. The creation of the AST and fast track posts is a controversial initiative because it can be argued that the creation of a few highly paid posts militates against a collegial approach to school improvement. A situation in which a few high-fliers are dubbed experts may lead to the disillusionment of many committed but less am-

bitious teachers who may leave the development work to those who are better paid. It is significant that very few schools have appointed ASTs to date.

THE PROFESSIONAL NATURE OF TEACHING

The term 'profession' is frequently applied to the work of teachers. It is first worth considering to what extent teachers may be regarded as professionals. Becker (1962) saw professionalism as merely a symbol for an ideology used to justify actions and behaviours. He noted that many occupations trying to become professions used the symbol in an attempt to increase their autonomy and raise their prestige. They would try to take on as many parts of the symbol as possible. Becker may well have considered teaching to be such an occupation.

There have been many attempts to identify the features of a profession. Bottery (1996) suggested that at least seventeen different criteria have been claimed at one time or another to describe professional behaviour. Salient characteristics included subscription to a specialised body of knowledge exclusive to the occupation which required learning in higher education. There was a code of professional conduct and ethics with a strong emphasis on service. There was a high degree of self-regulation by the professional body itself over entry, qualifications, training and members' conduct. It is perhaps worth examining how teachers have matched up to these professional criteria.

In 1957, Tropp (1957) felt that teachers had since the second world war, through steady development, reached the status of professionals. Teaching was seen as a worthwhile occupation. There were teaching associations whose aim was to raise professional standards. Teachers had fought for educational progress and been engaged in continuous research and evaluation. He felt that at work teachers had gained almost complete independence. They had earned their licensed autonomy and HMI were regarded as helpful senior colleagues. Tropp (1957) saw this professional development and independence within education as a safeguard to democracy and protection against the growth of dictatorship. This position prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s but was to radically alter through the 1980s and 1990s.

A number of occupations have developed higher levels of training and standards of practice to enhance their claims to professional sta-

tus. However, Wilensky (1964) said that many of these groups rested on a knowledge base which was either too general and vague or too narrow. They lacked autonomy and were supervised by those without professional status themselves. Etzioni (1969) preferred to classify these occupations as 'semi-professionals'. These workers, in his view, were characterised as working in bureaucratic organisations, a large number of them were likely to be female, training was usually less than five years, the knowledge base was weak and not directly used by the worker. Significantly, they had restricted autonomy because they were controlled by those in higher ranks. Their working day was tightly regulated and they were subject to checks in areas where their work was least visible. Teachers may be seen as being prime examples of semi-professionals. Such things as the need by teachers to report to parents on their child's progress, school inspections and the publishing of pupil performance in league tables help to regulate the autonomy of teachers.

Perhaps in realisation of the fact that teachers did not really match the model of the established or more traditional professions, there have been attempts to redefine the term 'professional' or to present different kinds of professionalism. Much of this discussion has focused on the actual practice of teaching. The modern professional, according to Schön (1983), constantly questioned and reflected upon practice. This involved the professional regarding his/her work from the point of view of the client or as an outsider. The purpose of this was to understand all aspects of the process resulting in greater professional insight. This whole procedure involving evaluation, criticism and ultimately self development, required openness and trust between those involved. Hoyle (1980) differentiated between two sorts of teachers. Restricted professionals are conscientious practitioners but are limited in outlook. Extended professionals seek to improve their practice by learning from other teachers and professional development activities. They are keen to be involved in practitioner research and to link theory to practice.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE POSITION OF TEACHERS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

It is perhaps worth considering the changing position of teachers in England at this point. Post 1944 is often seen as the 'golden age' of teaching (Lawton 1989) in terms of the autonomy granted to teachers in all aspects

of their work. However in the 1970s misgivings began to arise concerning the curriculum and educational standards. These fears were publicly expressed by Prime Minister James Callaghan in his Ruskin Speech of 1976 which instigated The Great Debate on standards of learning and teaching. Conservative opposition had already been voicing concern about the state of education, placing the blame at the teachers' door (Cox and Dyson 1969a, 1969b).

On gaining power in 1979 the Conservative Government radically changed the nature of education over a twenty year period. Their policy comprised an apparently contradictory mixture of increasing centralization and the development of market forces in education. In the compulsory sector this policy was manifested through certain significant reforms. The introduction of a National Curriculum increased central control of the curriculum. Greater parental choice was brought about by the introduction of open enrolment, the creation of City Technology Colleges, grant maintained status and, later, specialist secondary schools. Schools were allowed to be more adaptable to market demands by gaining control of their own budgets (LMS). Schools, and also teachers, were to be made more accountable for their actions with the introduction of comparative league tables of performance and a rigorous inspection regime under the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). By the end of this period teachers had little control of the curriculum as content and assessment were now under the control of national bodies, the National Curriculum Council and the Schools Examination and Assessment Council later combined to form the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Conservative policy did have its critics. Central controls were seen, by many, as too rigid. The policy of market forces was criticized as being unfair to certain groups and individuals in society. Due to the access of demand for education over the quality of supply the market still appeared to be dominated by producers.

Labour came to power in 1997 with modernizing education as a central plank of their political agenda. They talked of a partnership between all those concerned in the raising of standards in education. Labour has increased funding for education and created a strategy for professional development of teachers whilst expecting in return flexibility and cooperation from the teaching force in the introduction and develop-

ment of new initiatives designed to modernize the profession and improve schools (DFEE 1997; DFEE 1998; DFES 2001c). Whilst the rhetoric has changed from conflict to partnership under Labour, apart from different spending priorities, much of the Conservative reforms have been left in place (Docking 2000).

Throughout the Conservative administrations of the 1980s and 1990s many changes have been noted in the work process of teachers (Ozga and Lawn 1988). Their ability to control pace, content, volume and assessment of work declined. Routine administrative tasks grew in number. Schools' managements became more supervisory and concerned with performance levels, in keeping with their industrial counterparts. Teaching jobs became less secure with redundancy, redeployment and retraining issues attacking the professional. Within education Hoyle (1995) saw the meaning and use of the term 'professionalism' as having altered. The focus was now in, and not beyond, the classroom. It had come to mean a form of management-assured quality delivery. Teachers had now, in Dale's (1989) terms, moved from licensed autonomy, trusted by the state and allowed relative independence, to a more regulated autonomy, subject to greater external monitoring. Ozga (1995a) characterised teachers as bureaucratised, state professionals. It was the relationship with the state which she saw as most significant. The state had effectively retained strategic control of teaching, the curriculum and assessment whilst using school heads to develop the market strategy. This process involved cooption of management and the growth of managerialism. As market success required smooth production and eradication of problems, Ozga (1995b) suggested that deviations from policy were less likely to be tolerated. Thus under the guise of empowerment and collegiality, teachers were subject to increasing monitoring and surveillance. She suggested that the growth of management teams and supervisory functions may have 'extended' the professionalism of some but deskilled others. Bottery (1996) explained that these changes have involved retrenchment due to reduced budgets, increased scrutiny in terms of costs and efficiency, changes in contract which have redefined power relationships in favour of management, and greater content control over work.

It could be argued that the Labour government has reduced emphasis on the market but continued to develop control from the centre (Avis 1999). However, given the shortage of teachers, Labour has recognised

the need to raise the status of teaching through, for example, the establishment of the General Teaching Council (GTC). The GTC is the new professional body for teachers and started work in September 2000. A majority of the Council's 64 members are teachers, most of them elected. It is an independent body funded by teachers' registration fees. Teachers in maintained schools are required to register with the GTC. The GTC will advise the government on professional development, induction, career progression and performance management in the drive to raise standards of achievement. It will have powers to remove teachers from the register for serious misconduct or incompetence. There is still debate about how independent the GTC will actually be of government control and how its functions will relate to those of the DfEE and the TTA. Once again a government is talking of the teacher as a professional. However Bottery and Wright (1999) see this as a restricted view of professional activity. Emphasis is on the classroom and the techniques of teaching.

Thus there have been differing views presented as to the nature of teacher professionalism. Hoyle (1995) suggested that policies which could be seen by some as 'deprofessionalisation' could be regarded by the policy makers as making those occupations more professional in relation to the needs of their clients i. e. a process of reprofessionalisation. Whitty (1999) suggests that it is best to see these existing as competing versions of teacher professionalism rather than 'seeing any one as fitting an essentialist definition [...] and others as detracting from it' (p. 2). He suggests that which version different individuals support will be influenced by their political beliefs, values and position in relation to government reforms. Helsby (1996) states that local contexts, and in particular departmental cultures, are influential in shaping teachers' sense of professionalism. She contends that mutual support is important because it engenders self-confidence. Operating as groups or individuals within schools, teachers are affected by and react to wider issues. However, they are not totally determined by them. They form judgments, take decisions and act according to their own circumstances and perceptions. Undoubtedly the work of teachers became far more regulated during the Conservative administrations. Under Labour the talk is again of teacher professionalism though it would appear to be of a restricted form. This restricted professionalism may remain a straitjacket or may develop into the more licensed position which existed before.

The last twenty-five years have thus seen many changes in the nature of teacher professionalism. It can be argued that teachers are no longer encouraged to take a wider perspective and years of criticism have encouraged a culture of the restricted professional.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Within the teaching profession greater emphasis is currently being put on 'evidence-based practice' which, at its simplest, means analysing what teachers are doing with pupils to ensure that there are good reasons for a particular approach or task. Alternatively, they may be trialling a new way of teaching a design project read about in a professional journal or observed as being successful for another teacher. Being mindful of evidence within a teacher's practice includes taking careful note of the attainments of each pupil. Each school now receives from OFSTED a PANDA report (Performance *and* Assessment) which shows the school's performance data in comparison with national averages and with schools in similar contexts. Heads are expected to use the data as a management tool in the cycle of evaluation and improvement. Consideration is given as to the 'value added' to each individual pupil or group of pupils. 'Performance indicators' are identified for teachers to focus on with the subsequent year's classes in order to make year on year comparisons. Data from the school's PANDA is expected to help teachers measure the effectiveness of a department or year team.

The DfES is currently making available to teachers funds to assist their small-scale research into good practice in their classrooms (Best Practice Research Scholarship scheme). Many teachers who are undertaking further study for qualifications may find this initiative helpful. It is also intended to help disseminate good practice within the school and beyond. There is some scepticism within established research communities, however, about how secure the methodologies and theoretical frames of reference will be for such investigations. Bottery and Wright (1999) note that the drive to transform teaching into a research and evidence based profession, whilst being desirable in aiming to improve the craft of teaching, remains narrowly focused. There is little scope for reflection beyond the classroom and for wider pedagogical debate. This remains a 'technical-rational' approach to teaching.

TEACHER APPRAISAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

In 1991 staff appraisal was made compulsory under a teacher's contract of employment. Teacher appraisal as first introduced suffered from conflicting perceptions of purpose, being seen by some as a means of control over teachers and by others as a tool for professional development (Bartlett 1998). Its introduction, which came after a prolonged industrial dispute between teachers and the government over pay and conditions, was compromised. Teachers had to take part in appraisal and were required to set personal targets as a result of the process. However the process was not related to pay and the appraisal statements were to be confidential. Thus what could have become either a system for increasing the accountability of teachers or a means of enhancing their wider professional development was from the start ineffective. Staff appraisal, being costly in terms of time for both management and teachers, was quickly abandoned in school as ineffective.

Labour has now taken appraisal and reintroduced it in the form of performance management. This is part of a strategy designed to improve the performance of schools in terms of identified indicators. Schools have had to devise and implement a performance management system from September 2000. This involves the drawing up of a school development plan that sets clear targets within a realistic time frame. Thus targets are also set for subject departments and for each individual teacher in relation to this whole school plan. Performance management is seen as an ongoing cycle involving planning monitoring and review (DFEE 2000b).

Teacher performance can now be linked to pay. This means that if pupils meet the necessary performance indicators a teacher may be eligible for year-end incremental rises. All teachers are subject to annual performance review, but not all will necessarily opt for, or qualify for, salary enhancement through performance. A teacher has to be at the final incremental point of the main professional salary grade to apply to be assessed at the performance threshold. School heads and senior teachers will be expected to set objectives for individual teachers relating to various year groups and subject areas, for example, a teacher might be set the objective of developing a different approach to a teaching topic. Alternatively a small group of pupils not meeting expectations might be tar-

geted for extra attention or a specific classroom management technique. Assessment and benchmarking data derived from OFSTED inspections, SATS scores and GCSE results will be used to set targets in the school's development plan and objectives for individual teachers will fit with these overarching goals. The scope of objectives will relate to a teacher's responsibilities so head teachers will have objectives for pupil progress at school level, while heads of subject may look at progress by year group and teachers within departments focus on work with cohorts, groups or individuals (DFEE 1999b). Objectives are expected to cover pupil progress and teachers' professional development. The latter might involve observing other teachers' good practice or signing up for some particular training.

Performance management works best when it is an integral part of a school's culture; is seen to be fair and open; understood by everyone and based on shared commitment to supporting continuous improvement and recognizing success (DFEE 2000b, 2)

Thus performance management, like appraisal, has the rhetoric of professional development. Unlike in appraisal the targets set and their annual evaluation are not confidential. Thus it is now possible to link performance to pay. Once again there is a potential conflict of purpose between a process designed to monitor performance for accountability and to promote openness for professional development.

This model of professional development is controversial because it assumes a simplistic causal relationship between teacher input and pupil attainment. In Hoyle's terms (1995) it encourages restricted rather than extended professionalism. We know that there are a host of factors influencing pupils' performance that are beyond the control of the teacher, from the amount of television they watch to their attendance pattern and the extent of the support they receive from parents. We also know that teachers contribute more to a pupil's development than that which can be measured through examinations. Teachers have a concern for the whole person that includes his or her self-esteem, physical and emotional well-being, and cultural and spiritual development.

The performance management model also promotes a focus on the individual teacher as opposed to the subject or year team yet we know that much of the creative pedagogic and curriculum development work emanates from a team approach. This focus on individual development

contrasts with a 'total quality management' model of development which emphasises collaboration and teamwork (Scholtes 1995). The linking of individual performance to pay may, rather than increasing the motivation of teachers, have the opposite effect as cited in a Mori poll conducted after the first round of applications by teachers to cross the performance threshold (Mansell 2001). The system is here to stay but more sophisticated ways of assessing the contribution of a single teacher to a pupil's learning will need to be found if the profession is not to be fractured by what could become a very divisive methodology.

The ideology of performance management sits well within a technical-rational approach and the desire to itemise discrete teaching skills and teacher behaviours through, for example, QTS and NQT standards. Many have argued that this atomization provides an impoverished and partial model of the teacher and that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (Burton and Bartlett 2001). This dominant ideology has spawned a report commissioned by the DfEE to determine what makes an effective teacher. It has recently reported findings that come as no surprise to many serving teachers. The government used these early findings to set the standards for the new performance threshold and to inform its performance management appraisal system. Hay McBer conducted detailed interviews with 172 teachers and observed around 120 of them. 5000 questionnaires, completed by teachers, pupils and others, were also analysed. A summary of the report can be found at www.dfes.gov.uk/teachingreforms/mcber. The findings are grouped into three factors that affect pupil progress: a teacher's 'professional characteristics', 'teaching skills', and 'classroom climate'. The teaching skills thought to be particularly significant amongst effective teachers at both primary and secondary levels are high expectations and effective use of homework. Additionally at primary, strong time and resource management and good pupil assessment were most important whilst good planning was cited at secondary as being a key teaching component (Barnard 2000).

CONCLUSION

In a consumer age expectations are higher and people demand more of our public services. We want to provide world-class public services that help all children have the

best possible start in life, so that when they leave formal education they have a passion for learning and the desire and ability to succeed in the world. (DfES 2001a, 6)

Although during the past decade teachers have had more controls imposed upon them centrally, the act of teaching itself is still a largely autonomous activity in which the teacher is the final arbiter of his or her teaching and class management approach and through which teachers are able to make a significant long-term impact on the knowledge and skills of other individuals. Notwithstanding the managerial model of professional development which prevails currently, adopting the view that teaching is itself a learning act is more likely to foster lifelong learning amongst pupils and to encourage teachers to take ownership of their own professional development.

Ultimately, however, all teachers carry their own philosophy about their work, schools and the education system in general. Hopefully, this is shaped and reviewed in the light of accumulated professional experience. Good teachers seek out and use professional challenges and development opportunities in spite of rather than because of the prevailing government ideology of education.

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