



Four Ages of Professionalism and Professional Learning

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ABSTRACT *This paper conceptualizes the development of teacher professionalism as passing through four historical phases in many countries: the pre-professional age, the age of the autonomous professional, the age of the collegial professional and the fourth age—post-professional or postmodern. Current experiences and perceptions of teacher professionalism and professionalization, it is argued, draw on all these ages. Conclusions are drawn regarding new directions in teacher professionalism, and the linking of professional projects to wider social movements for public education and its transformation.*

Introduction

Teaching in many parts of the world is in the midst or on the edge of a great transformation. The expectations of teachers to get their students to high standards of performance, to ensure that all of them are literate and can and do learn, are escalating. Contexts of rapid change and uncertainty are drawing, and sometimes forcing, many teachers together to work more collaboratively in order to respond to such change effectively. Pressures and demands in some countries for students to learn new skills such as teamwork, higher order thinking and effective use of new information technologies, call for new styles of teaching to produce these skills—meaning that more and more teachers are now having to teach in ways they were not themselves taught. Teachers have been encouraged to work more with their colleagues and access the expertise they need to improve. Schools are having to reach out more to parents and communities, and this raises questions about teachers' expertise and how they can share it with people beyond their schools.

At the same time, shrinking public-sector finances and tightening policy controls have been pushing teachers to do more work, more compliantly and for limited reward. Overworked and underpaid teachers have had to master and comply with centrally imposed learning standards, detailed curriculum targets and pervasive testing regimes—and they have seen their work and their worth

become broken down and categorized into checklists of performance standards or competencies. All these conflicting pressures and tendencies are leading teachers and those who work with them to re-evaluate their professionalism and to make judgements about the kinds of professional learning they need to get better in their job.

Ask teachers what it means to be professional and they will usually refer to two things (Helsby, 1995). First, they will talk about *being professional*, in terms of the quality of what they do; and of the conduct, demeanour and standards which guide it. The literature usually refers to this conception as *professionalism* (Englund, 1996).

Teachers will also talk about being *a professional*. This normally has to do with how teachers feel they are seen through other people's eyes—in terms of their status, standing, regard and levels of professional reward. Attempts to improve this status and standing of teaching are usually presented in the literature in terms of *professionalization*. Professionalism (improving quality and standards of practice) and professionalization (improving status and standing) are often presented as complementary projects (improve standards and you will improve status), but sometimes they are contradictory. For example, defining professional standards in high-status, scientific and technical ways as standards of knowledge and skill, can downgrade, neglect or crowd out the equally important emotional dimensions of teachers' work in terms of being passionate about teaching, and caring for students' learning and lives (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996). In teaching, stronger professionalization does not always mean greater professionalism.

The concepts of professionalism and professionalization are 'essentially contested', as philosophers say. Outside education, professions have been represented theoretically, in the image of those who belong to them, and who advance their interests as having a strong technical culture with a specialized knowledge base and shared standards of practice, a service ethic where there is a commitment to client needs, a firm monopoly over service, long periods of training, and high degrees of autonomy (for example, Etzioni, 1969). Larson (1977) identifies the criterion of autonomy as a crucial one that helps distinguish professional from proletarian work. Friedson (1994) argues that common-sense discourses of professionalism and behaving like a professional have been captured by managerialism as a way to control white-collar workers. Meanwhile, Schön (1987) has re-cast professional action as comprising distinctive, reflective, practical judgement rather than esoteric knowledge.

In addition to the impact of these wider debates about the professions, teacher professionalism in particular has taken on very different meanings over the past century or so (Murray, 1992). Many parts of the world have witnessed several stages in the evolution of the idea of professionalism in teaching, each phase carrying significant residues and traces from the past.

Images of and ideas about teacher professionalism, and even about the nature of teaching itself, linger on from other agendas and other times—remaining as real forces to be reckoned with in the imaginations and assumptions of policy-makers, the public and many parts of the teaching profession itself. Teaching is not what

it was; nor is the professional learning required to become a teacher and improve as a teacher over time. This paper identifies four broad historical phases in the changing nature of teachers' professionalism and professional learning.

These phases are not universal, but are relatively common across Anglophone cultures—although there are differences even there (for example, teaching is far from being an all-graduate profession in New Zealand). The phases are ones with which many other nations are now engaging, however, although not necessarily in the same order. For example, Chile is trying to move more towards being an all-graduate profession (a characteristic of the second age of professionalism; see later), while at the same time experiencing more school-based staff development (a third-age phenomenon) [1]. The ages should therefore be seen as a contingent history of Anglophone nations that now contribute a collage of opportunities with which other cultures engage, rather than being viewed as discrete stages with an evolutionary necessity that all other cultures must follow.

The four ages are:

- the pre-professional age
- the age of the autonomous professional
- the age of the collegial professional
- the fourth age—post-professional or postmodern?

I will argue that the fourth age, which we are now entering, is marked by a struggle between forces and groups intent on de-professionalizing the work of teaching, and other forces and groups who are seeking to re-define teacher professionalism and professional learning in more positive and principled post-modern ways that are flexible, wide-ranging and inclusive in nature.

The Pre-Professional Age

Teaching has always been a *demanding* job, but it has not always been a technically *difficult* one. Even in the earliest incarnations of mass education, teachers struggled alone in their own classrooms to cover content with large groups of often-reluctant learners, with few textbooks or resources to help them, and with little reward or recognition. Teaching and learning could never be pursued without reference to the necessities of classroom control, and teachers' success and survival depended on their ability to balance the two.

In their investigation of the history of educational change efforts in the US, Tyack & Tobin (1994) point to the emergence of what they call a grammar of schooling. Like language, they argue, schooling has a fundamental grammar. Just as the grammar of language frames how we can speak, so the grammar of schooling frames how we can educate. Each grammar has its origins. But once established, each grammar also becomes highly stable, slow to change. Two of these—the graded school (with its batch-processing of age-graded cohorts divided into 'classes') and Carnegie course credits that have constituted the subject-based criteria for high-school graduation and university entrance—became institutionalized decades ago and now form the contemporary grammar of schooling.

In England and Wales, the contemporary system of accepted secondary school subjects was established and institutionalized through the 1904 Secondary Regulations that defined the academic subject base of secondary schooling (excluding more vocational 'subjects' at which working-class students were starting to excel!) (Goodson, 1988). Other educational changes enjoyed only temporary or localized success because they contravened the fundamental grammar of schooling. They were like localized dialects of change, used only for a short time, or on the experimental margins of educational life.

Public (state) education actually evolved as a factory-like system of mass education (later extended to secondary schools, which first emerged as small academies for subject-specialized elites), where students were processed in large batches and segregated into age-graded cohorts or *classes*. These were taught ('instructed') through standardized and specialized curricula (courses of instruction) (Cuban, 1984; Curtis, 1988; Hamilton, 1989).

What has come to be regarded as 'real school' to many people, as the seemingly normal, natural and given way to organize teaching and curriculum, is therefore a highly specific socio-historical invention, rooted in the needs and concerns of generations past (Meyer & Rowan, 1978; Metz, 1991). At the heart of this historical legacy is a particular set of practices that, for decades, defined the essence of teaching itself.

The basic teaching methods of mass public education were most commonly ones of recitation or lecturing, along with note-taking, question-and-answer, and seatwork (Cuban, 1984). Traditional, recitation-like patterns of teaching enabled teachers working with large groups, small resources and students' whose motivation was often in question to meet four fundamental demands of the classroom: maintaining student attention, securing coverage of content, bringing about some degree of motivation, and achieving some degree of mastery (Hoetker & Ahlbrand, 1969; Westbury, 1973; Abrahamson, 1974).

Funnelling classroom talk through the teacher reduced a potentially chaotic 'babble' to the carefully structured, question-and-answer pattern of two-party talk, where selected students acted as proxy representatives for the whole class, where the teacher initiated lines of inquiry and students merely responded, and where the teacher evaluated the accuracy, quality and appropriateness of student contributions, but not *vice versa* (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1974). The 'hands-up' pattern of student participation was carefully orchestrated by the teacher—competition was encouraged, attention sustained, some semblance of involvement secured—in the process of getting the pre-decided point across (Hammersley, 1974, 1976). This avoided excesses of boredom and inattention that would accompany straight lecturing—especially where false questioning trails could be set in the early stages, and the 'answer' or 'point' of the lesson could be delayed so that students had to work hard to discover it (Hammersley, 1977).

Within lesson structures of this kind, teachers do not orient themselves so much to the needs of individual students, but tend to treat the whole class as a kind of collective student (Bromme, 1987). The progress of groups of students in the higher (but not the highest) parts of the class achievement range is often moni-

tored especially closely by the transmission teacher, and used to 'steer' his/her judgements about the management and development of the lesson for the class as a whole (Dahloff & Lundgren, 1970). The teacher's predominant practical concern is not with the learning experiences of individual students, but with the overall instructional 'flow' of the lesson—with how well it is proceeding to its intended conclusion and maintaining order as it does so (Clark & Peterson, 1986).

At the heart of traditional patterns of teaching in Western societies, therefore, are fundamental problems of order and control. In her study of four junior high schools, Metz (1978, p. 67) remarked that 'school staffs are preoccupied with order because order is constantly threatened'. In his classic text on the *Sociology of Teaching*, Willard Waller memorably depicted the school as 'a despotism in a state of perilous equilibrium ... capable of being overturned in a moment' (1932, p. 10). The successful teacher in this setting, he said was 'one who knows how to get on and off his high horse rapidly' (p. 385). Traditional patterns of teaching were understandable coping or survival strategies for teachers in the first six decades of this century, given the purposes, constraints and demands that teachers had to meet (Hargreaves, 1977, 1978, 1979; Woods, 1977; Pollard, 1982; Scarth, 1987).

For a century or so, transmission teaching formed the accepted and largely unquestioned wisdom of what teaching really was. In this pre-professional view, teaching was technically simple. Once you had learned to master it, you needed no more help after that point. Schools where teachers continue to believe teaching is basically easy, where the pre-professional view persists, are ones that Rosenholtz (1989) has described as 'learning impoverished'. With teachers who feel there is little else to learn in teaching, they achieve poorer results in basic skills achievements than their more professionally oriented counterparts.

In this context of pedagogical certainty, professional learning for new teachers was largely seen as a matter of apprenticing oneself as a novice to someone who was skilled and experienced in the craft. In reality, much of that apprenticeship was served in the thousands of hours observing one's own teachers while being in their classes as a student (Lortie, 1975). To this experience was usually added a period of teaching practice or practicum, served at the side of an experienced cooperating teacher (as they later came to be called) as part of a wider programme of teacher preparation (Hargreaves, D., 1994).

Such teacher preparation programmes within American Normal Schools, for example, began humbly, given the limited visions of teaching for which new entrants to the occupation were then being trained; although teacher educators fought hard to improve the status of their courses and programmes over time. David Labaree (1992, pp. 136–137) describes this historical trajectory in the case of the US.

The rapid proliferation of high schools at the end of the nineteenth century posed a competitive threat to normal schools, but also gave normal school faculties the opportunity to raise admission standards and pursue college status. By the 1920s, normal schools were being converted wholesale into state teachers colleges, which in turn transformed the

faculty members into college professors ... Students tended to treat these institutions as mechanisms for acquiring the educational credentials needed to get ahead as much as for acquiring a teaching certificate. After the Second World War, state teachers' colleges continued to adapt to this demand and to the professional aspirations of their faculties by rapidly converting themselves into full-service state colleges.

As teacher education programmes and institutions ascended the ladder of status and acceptance, a more philosophical and theoretical base was made available to new teachers. But so tenacious was the grip of traditional teaching within the grammar of schooling, that even those teachers who appeared to espouse new philosophies of teaching and learning during their teacher education programmes quickly reverted to transmission and recitation patterns when they took up their first positions. And when, in hindsight, they evaluated their teacher pre-service education experience, it was usually only the practicum that retained any value for them (Hanson & Herrington, 1976; Lacey, 1977; Hargreaves & Jacka, 1995; Sugrue, 1996).

Practice made practice (Britzman, 1991). The unquestioned grammar of teaching was passed on from experienced teachers to novices. And once they had served their brief apprenticeship, experienced teachers saw no more of their colleagues in the classroom, received no feedback on their practice, and changed and improved mainly by trial and error, in their own isolated classes. This individual, intuitive and incremental approach to improvement and professional development confined teachers in the pre-professional age to what Hoyle (1974) calls 'restricted professionalism'—scarcely a form of professionalism at all.

Summary and Implications

In the pre-professional age, teaching was seen as managerially demanding but technically simple, its principles and parameters were treated as unquestioned commonsense, one learned to be a teacher through practical apprenticeship, and one improved as a teacher by individual trial-and-error. The 'good' teacher was the 'true teacher' who 'devoted herself to her craft', demonstrated loyalty and gained personal reward through service, 'whatever the costs'. In this age, teachers were virtually amateurs: they 'only needed to carry out the directives of their more knowledgeable superiors' (Murray, 1992, p. 495).

These pre-professional images and discourses of teaching and teacher development are not just items of historical curiosity. They persist, for example, in pockets of the profession today, especially among teachers in their later career who started their work in the pre-professional age (Huberman, 1993; Sugrue, 1996; Weber & Mitchell, 1996). As McCulloch (1997) has shown in Britain, pre-professional images are also highly influential among many Ministers or Secretaries of State for Education, who tend to draw on their own biographical (and sometimes sentimental) memories of schooling as children, instead of referring to broader histories of education as a public project, as they go about the business of formulating

educational policy. Pre-professional images also figure prominently in public perceptions of teaching among adults whose own schooling and experiences of teachers took place in the pre-professional age, and whose nostalgia-tinted ideas about teaching often remain rooted there (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998).

Finally, pre-professional images of teaching continue to be dominant in many East Asian countries, partly because of the constraints of class sizes and other factors mentioned earlier, but also because of the cultural importance of Confucian conceptions of teaching and authority within schools and families. In these contexts, the designation 'pre-professional' may be a derogatory misnomer, since certain Asian whole-class teaching methods such as 'sticky probing' (questioning an individual's understanding at some length in front of the rest of the class) are often explicitly refined and reflected upon by educators themselves (Watkins & Biggs, 1996). However, the grave danger is that when these precise whole-class methods are lifted out of their Asian context and transposed to the West (as some have advocated for whole class, primary teaching in Britain), they may not be added as one more technique to teachers' existing repertoires, but may amplify existing Western assumptions about and attachments to pre-professional versions of whole class teaching among the public, and among those parts of the profession least interested in their own learning.

In the still pervasive and influential pre-professional view, teachers are (at best) enthusiastic people, who know their subject matter, know how to 'get it across', and can keep order in their classes. They learn to teach by watching others do it, first as a student, then as a student teacher. After that, barring a few refinements gained through trial-and-error, they know how to teach and they are on their own! If one holds to a simple, pre-professional image of teaching, teachers need little training or ongoing professional learning, preparation time is relatively expendable (since the demands of preparation are not so great), and budget cuts that reduce contact with colleagues outside the classroom are seen as having little impact on the quality of what goes on within it (because it is assumed that teachers control everything within their individual classroom domain and keep all their work confined to it). If the task of teaching is seen as basically simple, why do we need to invest in continuous professional learning beyond a few inservice sessions connected to the government's latest policies?

Given the growing diversity of our classrooms and of students' learning needs within them, it is important to confront these images and discourses of professionalism that deny the difficulty of teaching. Combatting the pre-professional view of teaching means challenging the nostalgia that many policy-makers, members of the public and teachers themselves have for 'real teaching' and 'real schools'! As the novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1982, 1988) portray so superbly, a strong dose of reality can be a powerful cure for nostalgia—whether this involves exiles returning to their actual homeland, or adults being led through focus group discussions to remember the gritty details (and not merely the ideal images) of their own schooling. Against this, policy-makers and the public need to be persuaded of how complex and difficult teaching is today in an age of cultural diversity and new technology, why teaching needs to become more sophisticated

still, and what kinds of supports and learning opportunities teachers need to improve their work even further.

Governments who are largely interested in keeping costs down, demeaning teaching and tightly controlling it have little chance of being persuaded of this view. Arrogance is even more impervious than ignorance as an obstacle to dialogue. Instead, educators everywhere would do best to realize that when the arteries of communication to government are blocked, it is best to build a by-pass around them and capture the imagination of the public on whose votes governments ultimately depend—by opening up schools and teaching in all their complexity to the community, making what educators do more visible, and thereby countering the pervasive nostalgia for ‘real teaching’ that keeps the pre-professional prejudices on which governments can feed alive (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998).

The Age of the Autonomous Professional

From the 1960s onwards, the status and standing of teachers in many countries improved significantly, compared with the pre-professional age. Canadian teachers, for example, achieved substantial salary raises in the 1970s—as did British teachers through the Houghton pay award of 1973. Almost everywhere, teacher education became increasingly embedded within the universities, and teaching moved closer and closer to becoming an all-graduate profession (Labaree, 1992). In England and Wales, especially, teachers enjoyed unprecedented autonomy over curriculum development and decision-making—especially where they worked with courses or age groups that were not constrained by the requirements of external examinations (Lawton, 1980; Lawn, 1990). With the international space race, and the commitment to investing in developing scientific and technological expertise, educational innovation mushroomed in mathematics, sciences and other subjects as well. Governments and charitable foundations invested in imaginative and ambitious curriculum projects and packages that stimulated excitement about curriculum development. Developed by ‘experts’ in Higher Education, Regional Laboratories and similar organizations, these projects encouraged individual schools and teachers everywhere to take up the projects’ ideas, and experiment with the new approaches to student-centred learning that they contained. This was the era of curriculum innovation, of designer projects, and of appeal to individual teacher initiative as the levers for educational change (Weston, 1979). Although projects were often formally adopted, however, they were rarely implemented faithfully in the classroom, still less institutionalized into the routines of teachers’ practices (Fullan, 1991). Paradoxically, this was because of the very autonomy of teacher judgement that these projects presumed—subject department heads might agree on purchasing the materials, but how classroom teachers taught them was ultimately left to their individual ‘professional’ judgement—with the effect that the innovations were often used in very different ways than their designers intended (for example, Atkinson & Delamont, 1977).

In this post-war period, the words ‘professional’ and ‘autonomy’ became

increasingly inseparable among educators. Over time, many teachers were granted a measure of trust, material reward, occupational security and professional dignity and discretion in exchange for broadly fulfilling the mandates the state expected of them (Helsby & McCulloch, 1997). Teachers enjoyed a kind of 'licensed autonomy', as some writers called it (Dale, 1988). In what Hobsbawm (1994) calls the 'golden age' of history in the twentieth century (at least in the industrialized North and West), full employment, futures for school leavers to go to, the favourable demographics of a baby-boom expansion in the school population, and the belief that an expanding economy provided the wherewithal to treat education as an investment in human capital, all helped to relieve teachers from external pressures on their pedagogical freedom.

Meanwhile, pedagogy itself was losing its sense of singularity. While very many teachers continued to teach in the same broadly didactic way, how teachers taught was no longer beyond question. From the 1960s onwards, classroom pedagogy started to become an ideological battleground between child-centred and subject-centred education, open classrooms and closed classrooms, traditional methods and progressive methods. Heady accounts of the explosive success of open education in England were brought back to, and widely disseminated throughout, North America (Silberman, 1970). Deschooling and freeschooling commanded broad and popular readerships (Holt, 1969, 1971; Postman & Weingarter, 1969; Illich, 1971). Experimental and alternative schools sprang up at the elementary and secondary levels (Smith & Keith, 1971). The child-centred, developmentalist theories increasingly espoused in Faculties of Education were now extending their influence into the world of educational practice. Pedagogical expertise was no longer something that could be passed on as an assumed tradition from expert to novice. For more and more teachers, pedagogy was becoming an ideological decision; an object of judgement and choice. Unquestioned routines and traditions were being replaced by an ideological conflict between two great metanarratives of traditionalism and progressivism.

In reality, the claims of open education (as of innovative curriculum projects) were often exaggerated. Actual incursions of progressive practice into the traditional grammar of teaching seemed modest at best. There was little evidence of discovery learning or cooperative groupwork (Galton *et al.*, 1980), and basic skills continued to receive exceptionally high emphasis (Bassey, 1978). The problem, as school surveys showed, was not that teachers needed to go back to basics, but that they never really got away from them in the first place (Goodlad, 1984; Tye, 1985).

In all this, the precepts of teacher pre-service education corresponded exceptionally poorly with the realities of classroom practice as most new teachers experienced them, and tragic tales of how new teachers lost their ideals and complied with existing definitions of classroom reality in order to ensure their very survival, persisted for many years and continue today (for example, Hanson & Herrington, 1976; Lacey, 1977; Bullough *et al.*, 1991; Schempp *et al.*, 1993; Hargreaves & Jacka, 1995).

Similar problems afflicted the growth and impact of continuing professional development and inservice education. While expansion of inservice education

during this period was remarkable (Fullan & Connelly, 1990), the shape it took was less impressive. Workshops and courses were delivered off-site by experts, and received by teachers as individuals, who were then unable to integrate what they had learned into their practice when they returned to workplaces that did not understand or support their efforts (Little, 1993).

One of the overriding characteristics of teaching at this time was its individualism (Hargreaves, 1980). Most teachers taught in a box. They instructed their classes in isolation, separated from their colleagues. In the 1970s and 1980s, individualism, isolation and privatism were identified as widespread features of the culture of teaching (Zielinski & Hoy, 1983; Rosenholtz, 1989). Johnson's (1990) study of 115 'good' teachers (among whom one might expect higher than usual rates of collaboration) still found an important minority of isolated teachers within the sample. Of those who did collaborate, the majority maintained close relationships with only a very small number of colleagues. One of her respondent's comments is especially poignant.

Teachers are isolated people. They don't know what others are doing. Things that work for them, they keep year after year. You don't have the time to sit down and discuss with each other from different areas. As small as this school basically is, I don't know all the people who are here. (Johnson, 1990, p. 151)

When teachers did interact, this tended to be around materials, discipline, and individual student problems rather than about curriculum goals, teaching behaviour, or classroom learning (Lortie, 1975; Little, 1990).

The consequences of teachers' classroom individualism, and the individualistic ways in which they experienced inservice courses off-site and away from their immediate colleagues, were extensive and disturbing. They included:

- lack of confidence and certainty about effectiveness because of limited feedback on performance (Rosenholtz, 1989)
- impaired improvement as a teacher, because of lack of opportunities to learn from colleagues (Woods, 1990)
- limited senses of efficacy, and of self-belief in the power to change children's lives and futures, because of lack of feedback and support (Ashton & Webb, 1986)
- tendency to focus on short term improvement that makes a difference in one's own classroom, with one's own students, rather than on more fundamental forms of long-term or school-wide change (Lortie, 1975)
- proneness to self-defeating guilt and frustration, especially among exceptionally committed teachers (Hargreaves, A., 1994; Johnson, 1990)
- lack of consistency and coherence between teachers in expectations and programmes that are created for students (Campbell, 1985)
- lack of professional dialogue that might cause teachers to reflect on and re-shape their practice in ways that could serve students better (Little, 1990)
- the irony that isolation does not create a kaleidoscope of individuality and

iconoclastic eccentricity in teachers' classes, but dull routine and homogeneity (Goodlad, 1984)

- an atmosphere of uncaring and indifference in relation to students' needs in large secondary schools because teachers do not share students in common (Hargreaves *et al.*, 1996)

The causes of teacher individualism were equally various and included:

- the physical, egg-crate structure of schooling that divided teachers from one another and which efforts at collaboration always had to overcome (Lortie, 1975)
- the habit and routine of teachers having already worked within existing grammar of schooling for decades; the impossibility for many teachers of imagining anything else (Hargreaves, A., 1994)
- economizing of effort in the face of unwanted multiple innovations and accelerated educational reform (Flinders, 1988; McTaggart, 1989; Dow, 1996)
- anxiety and self-doubt about competence, whose flaws would be exposed by observation and inspection—a point that has been widely asserted but not empirically proven (Hargreaves, 1980; Joyce & Showers, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989)
- strong emotional bonds with students from whom primary or elementary teachers in particular get valuable 'psychic rewards', that they do not want to weaken by sharing those students with other colleagues (Lortie, 1975)

Summary and Implications

The age of professional autonomy was marked by a challenge to the singularity of teaching and the unquestioned traditions on which it is based. While the challenge was often rhetorical, it nonetheless justified the principle that teachers had the right to choose the methods they thought best for their own students. Pedagogical choice was polarized and permissive. As these first chinks of choice opened up in the occupation of teaching, autonomy and protection from interference had to be guarded more than ever. The spread of teacher pre-service education in the universities and the growth of inservice education provided by experts added weight to the claims to expertise on which the rights to autonomy would rest.

While modernistic models of *professionalization* in teaching—in terms of lengthening training, extending accreditation, and making the knowledge base in teacher education more academic—might have helped enhance the status of teachers in the community and of teacher educators in the university (Labaree, 1992), the 'licensed autonomy' with which this strategy was associated often did little to further the *professionalism* of teaching in terms of the quality of the work (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996). This strategy insulated teachers from the community by keeping teachers on pedestals above the community, it isolated teachers from one another, and it subordinated teachers' professional learning to academic agendas, which often had only tenuous connections to their practice. Professional autonomy might have stimulated many innovations, but with no

support structures for teachers, few innovations moved beyond adoption to successful implementation, and fewer still became institutionalized throughout the system as a whole (Fullan, 1991). The benefits of inservice education seldom became integrated into classroom practice, as individual course-goers returned to schools of unenthusiastic and uncomprehending colleagues who had not shared the learning with them. Finally, pedagogy largely stagnated as teachers were reluctant or unable to stand out from their colleagues and make anything more than modest changes of their own. The age of professional autonomy provided teachers with poor preparation for coping with the dramatic changes that were headed their way and against which their classroom doors would offer little protection.

The Age of the Collegial Professional

By the mid to late 1980s, individual teacher autonomy was becoming unsustainable as a way of responding to the increased complexities of schooling. The world in which teachers worked was changing, and so was their own work. More and more teachers faced the prospect of having to teach in ways they had not been taught themselves (McLaughlin, 1997). Yet, the persistence of individualism in teaching meant that teachers' responses to the challenges they faced were often *ad hoc*, uncoordinated with the efforts of their colleagues and based on rates of development in their own knowledge and skill that just could not keep pace with the constantly changing demands they had to meet (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

In an age of increasing uncertainty, teaching methods are now proliferating far beyond simple distinctions between traditional and child-centred methods. Administrative mandates to teach in particular ways are being imposed and overturned at an ever increasing rate. As the authority of external scientific expertise is being eroded, and course-based professional development delivered by experts outside the school is also being questioned (Day, 1999), many teachers are starting to turn more to each other for professional learning, for a sense of direction, and for mutual support. The role of the teacher has expanded to embrace consultation, collaborative planning and other kinds of joint work with colleagues. In a world of accelerating educational reform, this kind of working together can help teachers to pool resources, and to make shared sense of and develop collective responses towards intensified and often capricious demands on their practice. It also calls for new skills and dispositions, and for more commitments of time and effort, as teachers rework their roles and identities as professionals in a more consciously collegial workplace.

Not all teachers are being drawn to their colleagues, of course. Many remain ignorant about or indifferent to the possibilities of collaboration, and some cling tightly to their classroom autonomy when others try to force collaboration upon them (Grimmett & Crehan, 1992). While there is little solid evidence about the extent to which teachers in general are now working more collaboratively, numerous case studies and interview-based inquiries point to growing commitments to collaboration, and testify to its mounting importance in the landscape of teaching

(for example, Nias *et al.*, 1989, 1992; Campbell & Neill, 1994; Acker, 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 2000), not least as a way of making sense of and responding to new external curriculum and assessment demands (Helsby & McCulloch, 1997). What factors have been responsible for the emergence of collaborative teacher cultures? Why have they started to gain such prominence in recent times?

No one factor can be regarded as the crucible of collaboration. Many influences have forged it into existence. These include the following.

- *Expansion and rapid change in the substance of what teachers are expected to teach.* This makes it harder and harder for individual teachers to keep up with developments in their subjects, and makes teamwork and coordination of knowledge increasingly essential (Campbell, 1985; Hargreaves *et al.*, 1992).
- *Expansion of knowledge and understanding about teaching styles and methods.* How teachers teach is no longer an amateur assumption (Soder, 1990), an unquestioned tradition. Nor is it a matter of taking ideological sides between progressives and traditionals, Left and Right. The knowledge base on teaching strategies has expanded dramatically in the past decade and a half, with metacognition, situated cognition, cooperative learning, computer-based inquiry, student self-assessment and portfolio assessment all influencing the field (Joyce & Weil, 1980). No one teacher can be a virtuoso performer of all of the strategies. And no one method can be conclusively or comprehensively shown to be scientifically superior to the rest. What matters is how the strategies are selected and combined to meet the needs of particular and unique groups of students in any setting. Drawing judiciously on the knowledge base, teachers working together in one school or department can fulfil this task collectively much better than they can alone.
- *Addition of increasing 'social work' responsibilities to the task of teaching.* Teachers say their job is more and more packed with social work responsibilities (Hargreaves, A., 1994). They have to deal with and they worry about escalating violence in their schools (Barlow & Robertson, 1994). Changing family structures and growing poverty are widely seen as a source of difficulties (Elkind, 1997; Levin & Riffel, 1997). Guidance or pastoral care is now viewed as every teacher's responsibility, not just that of a specialized few (Levi & Ziegler, 1991) and teachers must work together more to resolve the learning and discipline problems they face (Galloway, 1985).
- *Integration of special education students into ordinary classes.* Teachers today have to deal with a much wider range of abilities and behaviours than many once had. This requires individualized learning programmes, additional planning, and more consultation with special education resource teachers, to draw on extra expertise that classroom teachers do not always have themselves (Wilson, 1983).
- *Growing multicultural diversity.* This also challenges teachers to acknowledge the wide range of understandings, prior knowledge and learning styles that exist in their classes, and to modify their teaching practice accordingly (Ryan, 1995; Cummins, 1998). Teachers must learn how to individualize their teaching and

create more opportunities for *all* their students to be included in classroom conversation (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Nieto, 1998). This places high demands on their expertise, which they can mainly improve only through interaction with colleagues (Newmann, 1994; Lieberman, 1996).

- *The structural limits to improving classroom teaching.* Existing structures and cultures of secondary schooling are poorly designed to accommodate new teaching strategies. When teachers in an individualized culture work against ingrained structures of subjects, time periods and single-teacher classes, they may find themselves having to try new methods several times a day for fixed time periods with different classes, rather than having longer time frames and other teachers of other subjects alongside to assist them (Hargreaves *et al.*, 1996). Such teachers may also feel unnecessarily vulnerable (Kelchtermans, 1996) when they take risks, or experience early setbacks, if they believe that they are innovating alone. In reality, however, other colleagues, who could otherwise be powerful sources of learning and moral support, may actually be engaged in similar struggles in other classrooms (but perhaps in other subjects) elsewhere in the school (Hargreaves *et al.*, 1992).
- *The alienating nature of secondary school structures for many students in early adolescence.* This leads either to physical dropout or to less visible but equally important psychological disengagement from school. Secondary schools have often failed to become real communities for their students (Hargreaves, 1982). Secondary school students at risk often feel there is no adult in school who really knows them or cares for them. In order to rectify these problems of alienation and impersonality in secondary schools, efforts have been made in a number of places (but not including countries with a strong subject-based National Curriculum) to create what are variously called mini-schools, sub-schools or schools-within-schools for early adolescents which bring together groups of 80–100 or so students, taught by a small team of four or five teachers, so that the teachers and students know each other well, and the students develop a sense of attachment to their community. In the process, schools-within-schools also bring teachers together to talk about and work with students they hold in common, and not just plan around subject matter together (as is the more customary emphasis within secondary school subject departments) (Sizer, 1992; Hargreaves *et al.*, 1993; Meier, 1998).
- *Changing structures, procedures and discourses of school management and leadership.* Changes in patterns of management, decision-making and leadership, introduced in part because of fiscal stringency, and in part because of the influence of trends in organizational restructuring in the corporate sector, have led to heightened emphases on teamwork and collaborative decision-making among school staffs (Hannay & Ross, 1997).
- *There is increasing evidence of the vital contribution that cultures of collaboration make to widespread improvements in teaching and learning, as well as successful implementation of change.* From the mid-1980s, evidence has accumulated that cultures of collaboration are not just a self-indulgent teacher luxury, but have positive and systematic connections to teachers' senses of efficacy about being able to make

a difference with their students. Such cultures also influence teachers' willingness to take risks, and the likelihood of their being committed to continuous improvement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1989; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Ross, 1995; McLaughlin, 1997). When this collaboration extends beyond talk into practice and joint work among teachers, when the ties between teachers are strong and professionally meaningful, then the benefits are likely to be especially positive (Little, 1990). Moreover, peer coaching between teachers has been shown to add greatly increased value to the successful implementation of new teaching strategies (Joyce & Showers, 1988). Teachers normally learn better together than they do alone. 'Like students, teachers learn by doing, reading and reflecting, collaborating with other teachers, looking closely at students and their work, and sharing what they see' (McLaughlin, 1997).

In this respect, professional development is usually most effective when it is not delivered by extraneous experts in off-site locations, but when it is embedded in the life and work of the school, when it actively secures the principal's or headteacher's support and involvement, and when it is the focus of collaborative discussion and action (Little, 1993). Accordingly, this period has witnessed a shift in patterns of professional learning, inservice education, and pre-service teacher education, to more school-based forms [2]. Teachers often learn best in their own professional learning communities. Many of these are often on-site, built into ongoing relationships and teams within departments, in interdisciplinary teams across them, in specific projects and task groups, and so forth (Little & McLaughlin, 1994; Siskin, 1994; Grossman, 1996). A strong collaborative culture (Nias *et al.*, 1989) or professional community (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994) can even make highly effective use of external input—including the much-maligned one-shot workshops and inspirational speeches by 'experts'—because teachers process it together in ways that have value and make sense for the school community in which they work (Wideen *et al.*, 1996).

The forms of collaboration that have emerged during this age are quite different from those that have been initiated in the fourth age as a specific and episodic response to imposed curriculum reform, which, the research shows, tends to fade away fast once the initiatives have been implemented and individual business can resume as usual. This has demonstrably been the case in the implementation of the English and Welsh National Curriculum, for example, confounding predictions of David Hargreaves (1994) that it would unintentionally herald a 'new professionalism' in teaching (Woods *et al.*, 1997; Helsby, 2000).

Summary and Implications

In the still emerging age of the collegial professional, there are increasing efforts to build strong professional cultures of collaboration to develop common purpose, to cope with uncertainty and complexity, to respond effectively to rapid change and reform, to create a climate which values risk-taking and continuous improve-

ment, to develop stronger senses of teacher efficacy, and to create ongoing professional learning cultures for teachers that replace patterns of staff development, which are individualized, episodic and weakly connected to the priorities of the school.

Professionalism here is 'new' rather than 'old' (Hargreaves, D., 1994); collegial and collective, rather than autonomous and individual (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996). However, if collegiality is 'forced' or 'imposed', teachers can quickly come to resent and resist it (Grimmett & Crehan, 1992; Hargreaves, A., 1994). Also, the flattened management structures, that are sometimes represented as empowerment, can easily turn into using collaboration as a form of exploitation and enslavement (Renihan & Renihan, 1992). In England, for example, while the National Curriculum initially created more teacher consultation and collaboration, 'the deluge of directives' that fell upon teachers, reduced much of this collaboration to technical tasks of coordination rather than working together for fundamental change (Webb & Vulliamy, 1993; also Helsby, 1995). Not surprisingly, collaboration of this sort began to be abandoned once the urgency of implementation had passed (Helsby, 2000). All too often, teachers are finding themselves in circumstances where they are losing possession of their purposes to central governments and other outside interest groups, while being offered the carrot (or is it the stick?) of professional collaboration to determine the means of delivering these purposes. Moreover, collaboration is often encouraged in working conditions that provide teachers with little time to meet each other in the school day—and, in some cases, what little time teachers already have is targetted for cutbacks and economies (Hargreaves, 1998b).

Many teachers caught up in educational reform and change are experiencing increasing role expansion and role diffuseness, with no sense of where their commitments and responsibilities should end. In this context, professional collaboration can help them marshall their resources, conserve their energy, and sift their way through the plethora of requirements and demands; or it can be a strategy to get teachers to steer themselves towards implementing the dubious policy ends of others, sacrificing their ideals and their energy as they do so (Smyth, 1995). In this respect, moving teachers' professional learning and preparation more towards the school site may increase its collaborative and practical potential, but in excess, if it is severed from the academic world altogether, this strategy will de-professionalize the knowledge base of teaching and dull the profession's critical edge.

Teacher professionalism and professional learning are at the crossroads—becoming more extended and collegial in some ways, more exploitative and overextended in others. The puzzle and the challenge for educators and policy-makers is how to build strong professional communities in teaching that are authentic, well supported, and include fundamental purposes, and benefit teachers and students alike (collegial professionalism), without using collaboration as a device to overload teachers, or to steer unpalatable policies through them. I will return later to how teachers might best negotiate their way through these alternatives.

The Fourth Age: post-professional or postmodern professional?

Changes and developments in education and in society at large at the turn of the millennium, suggest that teacher professionalism and professional development may be entering, or perhaps may even already be embedded in, a new era—the era of postmodernity. The fate of teacher professionalism in this era is by no means fixed, but is being and will be argued about, struggled over and pulled in different directions in different places at different times. One possible outcome of these processes is a new, postmodern professionalism that is broader, more flexible and more democratically inclusive of groups outside teaching and their concerns than its predecessors. This outcome, I will argue, will not arise by chance, nor will it even come into being as a gift from enlightened policy-makers. A widespread, postmodern professionalism that is open, inclusive and democratic will come about only through a conscious *social movement* (Touraine, 1995) of committed people—teachers and others—who work together for its realization.

The forces ranging against this possibility are considerable. They are forces that portend a post-professional age where teacher professionalism will become diminished or abandoned. This can occur and is already occurring in many places either by returning teachers to the hands-on, intuitive, learn-as-you-go approach of the pre-professional age, or by subjecting them to the detailed measurement and control of narrowly conceived competence frameworks; or both.

The Post-Professional Scenario

What is it about the postmodern social condition that poses challenges and threats to professionalism and professionalization in teaching? I have written about educational change and the postmodern condition in considerable detail elsewhere (Hargreaves, A., 1994), so will present only a brief summary here.

At root, the postmodern age—a period beginning in earnest somewhere around the 1970s—is driven by two major developments in economics and communications. First, there are new patterns of international economic organization where corporate and commercial power is extensively globalized; national economies (and other nation-state policies that are dependent on them) are less autonomous; nations and their policies are market oriented and frantically competitive economically, while being more inward and anxious about their identity culturally; and workplaces and other organizations are more flexible and less stable as company plants are closed down, relocated or restructured to remain competitive and respond quickly to the opportunities and demands that new technologies can detect and communicate more rapidly.

The second driving force of postmodernity is the electronic and digital revolution in communications, leading to instantaneous, globalized availability of information and entertainment. The communications revolution has conquered geography, compressing space and time. With more migration and international travel, it has created a proliferation, even a glut of knowledge and information, as well as increased contacts between of diverse cultural and belief systems.

One of the consequences of these postmodern developments has been a set of assaults on professionalism in universities, medicine, teaching and elsewhere. Market principles have become embraced so strongly by many governments, that schools (like many other public institutions) have been rationalized, cut-back, made more economically efficient, less of a tax burden and set in competition against one another for 'clients'. As the most expensive budget item, teachers, their salaries and their working conditions (such as preparation time and professional development opportunities) have been made a major target for economies. Teachers and their professional organizations (along with other members of what is sometimes derisively termed the educational establishment) have also been regarded as obstacles to the marketization of education—so they have been weakened through legislated changes in the conditions of union membership; restricting the scope of their decision-making; prescribing centralized curricula; shifting them towards more temporary contracts; and generally lowering their status through 'discourses of derision' that repeatedly hold them responsible for the alleged ills of public or state education (Ball, 1990). Efforts have also been made to limit the period and level of certification for initial teacher education (New Zealand) or shift most of the burden of 'professional' preparation (and therefore of opportunities for critical reflection) from higher education to the already overburdened world of schools (England) (Barton *et al.*, 1994). The effect of all this is to return teaching to an amateur, de-professionalized, almost premodern craft, where existing skills and knowledge are passed on practically from expert to novice, but where practice can at best only be reproduced, not improved. In the area of continuing professional development, self-managing schools (and the accompanying absence of system-level support) have created huge vacuums of professional development at the local level (Bullough & Gitlin, 1994; Hargreaves, D., 1994). Managers in the new neo-liberal scenario appear to be receiving more professional development, while teachers get less (Helsby, 1995).

The assault on professionalism is also a product of a gathering sense of uncertainty in the postmodern age and of how governments have chosen to respond to that uncertainty. A profusion of knowledge and information (including widely circulated claims and counterclaims about medical and scientific knowledge itself) is challenging assumptions about what is most essential to teach, and growing cultural diversity is challenging the established canons of Western (and also colonial) knowledge and belief that have underpinned the curriculum. As a result, schooling is becoming assailed by disputes and uncertainties. While some governments (especially in North America) have rolled with and embraced these uncertainties and complexities, valuing multiple intelligences, diverse learning (and teaching) styles, and a process-based rather than content-based curriculum, others have countered the spread of uncertainties with an emphatic assertion and imposition of false certainties.

The results, with which teachers have had to deal, have been centralized curricula and testing regimes that have trimmed back the range and autonomy of teachers' classroom judgement, and a market-inspired application from the corporate sector, of systems of administration by performance management (through

targets, standards, and paper trails of monitoring and accountability). These may have comforted governments and others with 'procedural illusions of effectiveness' (Bishop & Mulford, 1996), but they have also subjected teachers to the micro-management of ever-tightening regulations and controls that are the very antithesis of any kind of professionalism.

Not surprisingly, in a deepening context of de-professionalization, which these developments represent, particular initiatives like collaborative planning or rewarding teachers for excellent classroom performance (that could in other circumstances be professionally positive) are instead interpreted and responded to cynically by teachers. If they are weighed down by obese reform demands, teachers are unlikely to exercise their talents wholeheartedly in collaborative planning. They will construe it as a time-consuming ruse to have them steer through the details of policies which have been pre-decided centrally (and for which they, not the policy-makers, will be held accountable) (Webb & Vulliamy, 1993). Similarly, when teachers work within an overall climate where the profession generally is subjected to public blaming, shaming and intrusive inspection, then any moves to establish a higher paid cadre of 'advanced skills teachers' are perceived as at best tokenistic, and at worst divisive. As research on advanced skills teachers in Australia has shown, one common reaction when new initiatives and their coordination are required in a school is that teachers turn to their newly elevated colleagues and in effect say, 'you're the advanced skills teacher—you do it!' (Ingvarsson, 1992).

If teachers are to maintain and pursue their professionalism at this point, they will at the very least need to defend themselves against these powerful forces of de-professionalization. This means maintaining and reasserting many (although not all) parts of the modernistic project of teacher professionalization that were most prominent in the age of the autonomous professional.

- Teachers must continue to struggle for substantial and *competitive salaries for all teachers* that will attract and retain highly qualified people in the profession—and *not just for a few* in positions of responsibility or with 'advanced skills' status. This also entails persuading politicians and the public of the value of modestly increasing taxes to fund this strategy—in order to benefit the children that teachers teach.
- Teachers must *counter* the discourses of derision, of *blaming and shaming*, among politicians and the media, that have helped create and sustain a loss of public faith in, and regard for, teachers and their work. This does not mean that teachers should bury their mistakes or gild the lily when evaluating their own or their colleagues' performance. Indeed, as Scheff (1994) argues in his extensive writings on the sociology of shame, shame is not all bad. Healthy individuals acknowledge both pride and shame in their past actions. Only when we deny shame, he says, (as is common in Western societies) and project it on to others as blame, do negative consequence arise in the form of conflicts and standoffs—whether among nations, within families, or between unions and governments. For the public regard of teachers to be increased, politicians must be pressed to

balance their criticisms of teachers with stronger displays of authentic pride in their efforts and achievements. More than this, Scheff argues, if parties are to move beyond bitter conflict, each must first acknowledge and exchange their own sense of shame for past actions with one another in rituals of apology and purification. Each party, in other words, must commit to and engage in a kind of Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Only then can they move forward together and take shared responsibility for improvement. In education, this might involve governments publicly acknowledging that they have often actively weakened public education by providing insufficient financial support for it, and that they have managed the implementation of reform very badly in ways that have sometimes damaged rather than improved the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers unions might similarly participate in the ritual by conceding their past inabilities to deal adequately with incompetence and mediocre performance in the profession, as well as their inclination to oppose rather than initiate change that demands extra effort from them (even when there are benefits for students). As I shall argue shortly, this proposal is not so fanciful as it might initially sound.

- *Teachers must regulate, although not eliminate, the introduction of more unlicensed and uncertificated adults performing educational work in schools.* Given advances in teaching and learning, the diversity of students' learning needs and the sheer complexity of teachers' work these days, it is vital that more and better use is made of adults (paid and unpaid) from the community to work alongside teachers in schools and classrooms (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). There may even be some tasks which teachers now do (e.g. clerical, administrative or routine) that can be performed by less qualified individuals in their stead (Mortimore & Mortimore, 1994). But using people less qualified (and costly) than teachers to do complex work that only teachers can uniquely do (e.g. guidance or pastoral work that involves classroom teaching, or librarianship that involves curriculum planning and understanding students' learning differences), is something that the profession and the public should guard against at all costs if educational quality is to be protected.
- *All teachers must value and defend their entitlement to and their education in a rigorous knowledge base that undergirds their professionalism.* Engaging with this knowledge base on a continuing basis should be regarded as an individual obligation of all teachers, as well as an institutional entitlement. Engaging with such a knowledge base is what lifts teachers out of the pre-professional prejudice that only practice makes perfect. Such a knowledge base must be integrated with practice—indeed, it will be all the more effective for that. It must also be treated as providing forms of educational understanding, and ways of accessing and filtering educational research, rather than falsely deifying and uncritically applying a body of incontrovertible scientific 'fact' on effective teaching, learning, management and change strategies. What is clear, however, is that calculated attacks on the quality of educational research (for example, by England's Chief Inspector, Chris Woodhead, 1995), and attempts to dismantle or destabilize the university basis of teacher education, must be interpreted and resisted

as constituting not just an assault on teacher education, but on the professional status of teaching itself.

Successfully defending themselves against de-professionalization will require not only that teachers retain and return to parts of the modernistic project of professionalization, but also that they extend and enrich the idea and practice of collegial professionalism in ways which will genuinely improve the quality of teaching, rather than merely delivering and easing the implementation of government policies. What this means for teachers and those who work with them is as follows.

- As far as possible, teachers ensure that their *collaborative energies* are directly connected to the task of *improving teaching, learning and caring* in school—and that those connections are made obvious not only to teachers, but to parents and students as well.
- A convincing public case has yet to be made as to why *teachers need time for collaboration within the school day*—and not just after school or during the long vacations. To teachers, time to plan, prepare, mark and meet is never sufficient. To the public, especially when compared with their own official hours of work, it seems almost endless. The research evidence for the benefits of increased teacher time for working together seems almost incontestable (for example, Fullan, 1991). Meanwhile, the gap between professional and public perceptions of the need for such time seems largely unbridgeable. This is a gap that teachers must start to close—one parent, one school at a time.
- Teachers must direct their collaborative efforts toward positive change not only within their own schools, but also with their colleagues elsewhere, across the profession as a whole. One of the key initiatives here for teachers' professional effectiveness and public credibility is for them to *set and meet an exacting set of professional standards of practice*. Although there is increasing support across the world for this idea, these standards are often viewed as things that other people set for teachers (as with the Teacher Training Agency in England), as something that an elite of appointed teachers sets for a minority of their colleagues who voluntarily commit to them (as with the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards in the United States), or as something that teacher representatives of a unionist tradition use to describe and justify existing levels of practice instead of trying to raise them to a higher level (Ontario College of Teachers). No professional self-regulatory body in teaching seems yet to have developed the stomach or teeth to raise professional standards among all its members. Until such commitment is made, teaching will continue to lack professional credibility in the public's eyes, and teachers will continue to be the victims rather than being in the vanguard of educational reform.

Pushing Professionalism Further

Marshalling a more effective defence against de-professionalization is still not enough to protect and promote the professionalism of teaching; however, in the

postmodern age, the context of teaching is changing dramatically, and older modernistic versions of professionalism and professionalization will not be sufficient to address these significant changes.

For good or ill, one effect of the marketization of education is that teachers and principals are now having to turn outwards toward wider publics as they plan, prepare and defend what they teach (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). Teachers are also having to relate differently to communities beyond their school because of increasing multiculturalism and the impact of changing family structures on education. Schools can no longer pretend that their walls will keep the outside world at bay. They are already becoming more porous and permeable institutions (Elkind, 1997). Teachers are having to learn to work with more diverse communities, to see parents as sources of learning and support rather than interference, to communicate more with social workers and second language teachers, and so on. New technologies are further breaking down the barriers of schooling. Schools are losing their monopoly on learning, as students and parents can access more and more information independently of them. In Ontario, for example, when parent councils were recently established as a new form of school governance, involved parents often outflanked and outran school principals by communicating with each other about how the new councils should be run, on the Internet.

The need for closer relations between professionals inside the school and people 'out there' beyond it, is especially pressing given the experience of what many regard as a crisis of community in the postmodern age (Etzioni, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1994). This has been brought about by modernization and rational planning; the effects of urban design on distancing workplaces from residences; the sacrifice of neighbourly closeness to private lot-space and manicured lawns among the affluent; the individualizing effects of the automobile; the consuming seductions of shopping and of home entertainment; and, throughout all this, the eating up of relationships by the carnivorous consumption of work and time (Hargreaves, A., 1994; Hochschild, 1997). In the middle of all this, schools are increasingly seen as providing a possible focal point for retaining and regenerating community. This raises questions about how teacher professionalism can and should be re-defined so that professionals do not stand on pedestals above parents and the community, but develop more open and interactive relationships with them (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998).

The new relationships that teachers are having to form with parents is one of the greatest challenges to their professionalism in the postmodern age. Of course, communication with parents has always been a part of teachers' work and responsibility. Teachers often stress the importance of support at home for student success at school. Parent involvement in school has traditionally taken many forms, including parent-teacher interviews, parent nights, special consultation on student problems, parent councils, and parent volunteer help in the school and classroom (Young & McGheery, 1970; Midwinter, 1972; Epstein, 1995). In recent years, however, teachers' relationships with parents in our more permeable schools have become more extensive, and they have developed more edge.

Teachers face great emotional and intellectual demands as they extend their

work out beyond the classroom. Vincent's (1996) research indicates that most teachers prefer parents to work with the school as *supporters* or *learners*, since this enlists parental support but leaves existing versions of the teacher's professional authority intact. In these sorts of roles, parents basically support the teacher, by raising funds, organizing special lunches, preparing materials, and so on. They may even undertake practical tasks in the classroom like mixing paints or hearing children read (and in doing so, come to observe how complex the teacher's job is). They may be helped to understand new developments in the curriculum through workshops or classes, or they may be asked to participate in and co-sign home-school contracts about their children's learning and behaviour.

These relationships, however, are all too often professionally controlling and defensive. Vincent shows that 'support' often amount to co-optation and surveillance with the home's contract commitments being very specific, while the schools' contract commitments are evasively general. Also, because professionals often disagree about preferred teaching methods, teachers work to exclude parents from the core issues of teaching, learning and assessment that perhaps should concern them most—in an effort to minimize or stave off potential threats or embarrassment (Brito & Waller, 1993). In other words, the strength of relationships that teachers have with parents outside the school around core issues of teaching and learning may depend on the consistency of professional understanding about teaching and learning issues within it. In this respect, postmodern professionals who interact with people beyond the school must also be collegial ones inside it—postmodern professionalism includes and depends on collegial professionalism.

Teachers and parents tend to be especially diffident about issues of discipline. Unlike cultures such as Japan, where schools and families collaborate closely on behavioural and disciplinary issues (Shimahara & Sakai, 1995), teachers in many Western countries are caught in the paradox that parents often judge schools by their disciplinary record, but that, in teachers' eyes, they disapprove of teachers interfering with their own disciplinary judgements (Wyness, 1996; Blase, 1987).

Assessment is another area in which teachers often feel insecure when talking to parents. Many teachers suspect that they may be assessment impostors, that their technologies of grading are unsophisticated, subjective and suspect—making them open to parental criticisms which they tend to avoid. More responsive and open processes of assessment and reporting to parents can conversely reduce anxiety among teachers whose practices increase understanding and trust with parents (Earl & LeMahieu, 1997)—especially, when, once again, teachers routinely discuss assessment issues and particular examples of student work among themselves.

One other problem area in parent-teacher relations is that teachers are often inclined to have assumptions and expectations about parental interest and support that are socially or ethnoculturally biased. Studies over many years have pointed to educators' misjudgements about parental involvement—for example, misconstruing failure to attend meetings as failure to support their children or the school (for example, Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967). Professionals

are often inclined to impose their own culturally skewed values about good parenting onto social groups different from themselves (Burgess *et al.*, 1991; Levin & Riffel, 1997). Dehli & Januario (1994) recommend that schools and classrooms should be organized so that parents have easy and regular access, so that communication with parents takes a variety of forms and so that parent–teacher communications can be conducted in different languages (also Henry, 1994).

The literature on parent–teacher relations suggests that considerable strides have yet to be made beyond parent–teacher relationships that sustain teachers' senses of professional superiority (parents as supporters or learners), to ones of genuine partnership where relationships between teachers and parents are both open and authoritative (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996)—where, in Vincent's (1996) terms, they are relationships of reciprocal learning.

In postmodern professionalism, teachers should try to learn from parents as well as having parents learn from them. There are many ways to do this, including two-way student reports (Earl & Le Mahieu, 1997), having students run interviews with their parents on parents' night in relation to portfolios of work they have accumulated (rather than teachers trying to run and control all the communication themselves) (Hargreaves, 1997), setting homework assignments to be shared with a family member (Epstein, 1995) and setting up focus groups of parents to talk about their concerns, where the role of teachers in each group is primarily to listen and learn, and not to argue or defend (Beresford, 1996).

If postmodern professionals should be authoritative yet open in their relations with parents, and prepared to work with them in conditions of reciprocal learning, it is important that these partnerships are not idealized and that those who advocate them do not represent all parents as being altruistic and perfect. Just like children, parents can be a pain sometimes—they can try and get special deals for their own children (lenient grades, assignment to the best teacher, movement out of mixed ability tracks, etc.) (Oakes *et al.*, 1997), or rifle through papers on the teacher's desks when he/she is out of the classroom (Acker, 2000).

But it is even and especially when parents are critical, suspicious and difficult that partnerships are essential in the age of postmodern professionalism. Teachers must move towards the danger here, rather than closet themselves away (Maurer, 1996). It is in teachers' own interests to treat even imperfect parents not just as irritants or as targets for appeasement, but as the most important allies teachers have in serving those parents' own students and in defending themselves against the widespread political assaults on their professionalism.

The public is yet to be convinced that teachers need more time to work with each other, and not just their students. It has, in large part, yet to understand how and why teaching, and the students whom the teachers teach, have changed since the time most parents were themselves at school. It is not yet persuaded to commit to the kind of tax increases that would benefit the public education system and the quality of those who teach in it. For too long, the public has been a fragmented body of individuals—prone to nostalgia in an age of uncertainty, impressionable in the face of political and media-driven derisions of schools and teachers today, and easily bought by the market ideology of parental choice which helps them

believe that, in times of chaos, at least their own individual choices can benefit their own children in their own schools. It is now vital that the teaching profession works in partnership with the public, to become a vigorous *social movement* of acting subjects rather than fragmented individuals (Touraine, 1995), who work together to improve the quality and the professionalism of teaching.

When the arteries of communication to government are blocked—as they are where governments remain under the sway of neo-liberal market ideologies, and have minimal commitment to public education and public life—then teachers must build a by-pass around governments, and capture the public imagination about education and teaching today, on which governments and their electability ultimately depend. Developing a postmodern professionalism that opens schools and teachers up to parents and the public—one classroom, one school at a time—where learning runs authentically in both directions, is most likely to build the trust, the commitment and the support for teachers and teaching on which the future of their professionalism in the postmodern age will depend.

Conclusion

So we are now on the edge of an age of postmodern professionalism where teachers deal with a diverse and complex clientele, in conditions of increasing moral uncertainty, where many methods of approach are possible, and where more and more social groups have an influence and a say. Whether this postmodern age will see exciting and positive new partnerships being created with groups and institutions beyond the school, and teachers learning to work effectively, openly and authoritatively with those partners in a broad *social movement* that protects and advances their professionalism, or whether it will witness the de-professionalization of teaching as teachers crumble under multiple pressures, intensified work demands, reduced opportunities to learn from colleagues, and enervating discourses of derision, is something that is still to be decided. That decision, I believe, should not be left to 'fate', but should be shaped by the active intervention of all educators and others in a social movement for educational change which really understands and advances the principle that, if we want better classroom learning for students, we have to create superb professional learning and working conditions for those who teach them.

The conditions for such a social movement to grow and flourish are now starting to take shape at the turn of the century. The teacher demographics are favourable—a rash of retirements (hastened by teachers' demoralization with the effects of educational reform) is leading to a crisis of teacher recruitment in many parts of the world. Governments are consequently having to make strides (albeit small ones at first) to improve the public image of teaching so as to attract more people into the profession—by, for example, holding impressive commissions on the status of teaching (Australia) and the future of the profession (US), committing to higher pay rises than usual (New Zealand), or devising schemes to reward 'advanced skills teachers' (England and Australia). Governments are already beginning to bend. The public demographics are also favourable—with the aging

boomer generation seeing their own offspring leave home, and starting to become involved in their later years less with their own private interests and their own families, and more with volunteering and participating in the wider community.

The forces of de-professionalization in teaching have cut deep. But the objective prospects for a re-invigorated postmodern professionalism, and the creation of a broad social movement that would support it, are strong. If teachers want to become professionally stronger, they must now open themselves up and become more publicly vulnerable and accessible. That is their paradoxical challenge in the postmodern age.

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Notes

- [1] It is interesting that in recent years, perhaps because of an increasingly globalized discourse of educational reform, even those countries without a specific history of professionalism are beginning to engage with projects of professionalism and professionalization in education—for example, Chile, Argentina, Hong Kong and Japan.
- [2] Although there is a long record of examples of school-based curriculum development and professional development, it become a concentrated centre of activity, initiative and research from the late 1970s onwards in the Anglophone world, Scandinavia and elsewhere—see Hargreaves (1982) for a review.

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