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The teacher as reflexive professional: Making visible the excluded discourse in teacher standards

Introduction

For at least twenty years, teachers have been 'casualties' (Hargreaves & Lo, 2000 p.173) of declining support, tighter controls, shrinking budgets, intensified workload and standardisation. At the same time they are under increasing pressure from politicians and the community to be more accountable and to maintain standards (Sachs, 2003). Over the past decade, their positions have been further weakened by curriculum prescription, testing regimes, performance management, a casual workforce, new standards of professionalisation, increased monitoring and appraisal systems as well as the continued 'discourses of derision' (Ball, 1994; Hargreaves, 2000, p. 168; Thomas, 2011) from various sources.

The complexity of these political agendas, along with the already difficult tasks of understanding and applying a plethora of educational theories and approaches, catering for diverse student groups, and implementing new curricula, can create an overwhelming space for teachers to inhabit. We argue that reflexivity is an essential element of teacher professionalism so teachers can mediate the diverse conditions within which they work. This paper examines national professional standards from two countries to identify the extent to which reflexivity is embedded in key policy documents, which are intended to guide the work of teachers in those countries. First, we outline some of the competing agendas that teachers must manage in contemporary times, and then we use Margaret Archer's theories of reflexivity and

morphogenesis to highlight the importance of reflexive deliberation in teaching. Finally, we analyse national standards documents from Australia and the UK using critical discourse analysis, and argue that these blueprints for teachers' work exclude reflexivity as an essential and overarching discourse of teacher professionalism.

Reflecting on teaching in current times

In countries such as the UK, USA, and Australia, education has been subjected to organisational change, accountability regimes and calls for greater economic efficiency. According to Sachs (2003), this managerial discourse makes two distinct claims. First, efficient management solves all problems and secondly, private sector practices are equally appropriate for the public sector. Many governments around the world, including Australia and the UK now promote this type of professionalism for teachers. Through the promulgation of policies and the allocation of funds associated with those policies, this discourse of managerialism redefines what is meant by teacher professionalism (Day & Smethem, 2009; Sachs, 2003). Teachers are discursively repositioned as non-experts, the last in the line of a management hierarchy with central office at the top descending to regional offices and then to school principals. Educational decisions are made elsewhere and it is up to the teacher to work effectively and efficiently in a standardised accountable environment (Leaton Gray & Whitty, 2010). Managerialism sees teachers as unquestioning supporters and implementers of a competency-based, outcome-oriented pedagogy related to the world of work.

In this way the discourse is used as a disciplinary mechanism to control the work of teachers. This is achieved through training and certification sometimes referred to as

credentialism (Evetts, 2009). Ingvarson (2010) claims that Australia is at an 'unprecedented level of agreement about the need to implement a standards-based system for recognising highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers' (p. 59), much like the hierarchical system in the UK, which Leaton Gray and Whitty (2010) argue is fragmenting teachers' professional identities. Teachers may welcome this type of discourse, as they perceive it as an enhancement of status, without recognising that professional values are substituted by organisational values. Bureaucratic, hierarchical and managerial controls replace cultures of collaboration; there are competencies and licensing rather than trust; all accompanied by budgetary restrictions, standardisation of work practices, performance targets and accountability rather than professional judgement (Evetts, 2009). This is a form of professionalism that focuses on teachers' behaviour rather than their attitudes or intellectuality (Evans, 2011).

Professional judgement is a feature of new or 'principled' professionalism' (Goodson, 2000) which brings together cognitive dimensions of knowledge, along with the moral and social purposes of education and the emotional dimensions of teaching. This type of professionalism is in contrast to managerial professionalism, or what some see as 'deprofessionalisation' (Evans, 2008). In an environment of 'new professionalism', teachers can commit to being catalysts of change with a focus on teaching and learning, working collaboratively and effectively with each other and the wider community. Hargreaves (2000) in particular envisaged the possibility of new 'postmodern' professionals being open, inclusive and democratic, a conscious social movement of teachers committed to the greater good of the profession. Similarly, Leaton Gray and Whitty (2010) advocate a socially and politically active professional who works collaboratively with professionals in wider social and health care, and

Thomas (2011) suggests that teachers should actively engage in public debates about teachers and teaching.

Given that teaching demands significant personal investment, with personal and professional identities inescapably interconnected (Leitch, 2010), forms of 'new professionalism' (Goodson, 2000) which foreground reflexivity through 'continuous learning' and 'self-directed search' (Goodson, 2000, p. 187) for quality must be prioritised to enable real and sustainable quality outcomes for teachers and students. Policies and guidelines related to professionalism must account for the ways in which the personal and professional 'self' is examined and enacted in relation to ever-changing local and global social conditions in education and schooling (Fenech, Sumsion, & Shepherd, 2010). Transformative reflection or reflexivity is context dependent (Ovens & Tinning, 2009) and is characterised by mental and self-referential 'bending back' upon oneself of some idea or thought (Archer, 2010), such that one considers associated factors and influences and decides whether and how to respond or act in any given situation. Such reflexivity is in line with Evans' (2011) prioritisation of 'enacted' professionalism rather than 'demanded', 'prescribed' or 'assumed' professionalism as a real indicator of 'new' professionalism.

We use the term 'transformative reflection' (Ryan, 2010) interchangeably with reflexivity here, although we recognise the argument for the differentiation between reflection and reflexivity, particularly by Archer (2010). Many researchers and commentators agree that there are different types or hierarchical levels of reflection. Grossman (2008) suggests that there are at least four different levels of reflection along a depth continuum. These range from descriptive accounts, to different levels of

mental processing, to transformative or intensive reflection. He argues that one can be scaffolded at each level to produce more productive reflections. We argue that when reflective processes move to transformative or intensive levels, they become reflexive processes, such as those proposed by Archer (1995, 2007, 2010).

Theoretical framing: Reflexivity and mediation of subjective and objective conditions

Margaret Archer's (2007, 1995) morphogenetic approach to realist social theory provides a useful framework to understand the ways in which teachers manage competing influences and deliberate about pedagogic action in the classroom. She argues that social structures or contextual forms are always transformable but always constrained as they take shape from, and are formed by, agents. In proposing an analytical dualism whereby structure and agency are seen as separate rather than conflated, she argues for their complementarity rather than their counteraction. For Archer (2007), the interplay and interconnection between individuals and social structures is crucial to understand courses of action produced by subjects through reflexive deliberation. In this way, individuals are seen as active agents who mediate their subjective concerns and considerations (values, priorities, knowledge & capabilities) and their objective circumstances (for example curriculum and assessment standardisation, accountability etc) to act in certain ways. Whilst agential powers and actions are conditioned by social structures, these structures are not considered by Archer to be 'forces', but rather as 'reasons for acting in particular ways' (Archer, 1995 p. 209). These actions can be transformative (morphogenetic), in that they transform the social structures or cultural systems within which they operate, or they can be reproductive (morphostatic) as they maintain structural and cultural

forms. The 'morpho' variable in Archer's (1995) work acknowledges that 'society has no pre-set form or preferred state' (p.5); so even though some ways of being become normalised, they are always shaped rather than pre-determined.

The courses of pedagogic action that teachers take are thus a result of their reflexive deliberations (similar to Evans' (2011) internalisation process) about their knowledge base, pedagogic know-how, and ontological positions in relation to the complex interplay of contextual structures in place around the teaching of different discipline areas. Deliberation is concerned with 'exploring the implications of endorsing a particular cluster of concerns from those pre-selected as desirable to the subject during the first moment' (Archer, 2007). The first moment (discernment) occurs when internal dialogue compares and contrasts reflective, retrospective and prospective considerations. The reflexive cycle continues as the subject moves through the moment of dedication, not only deciding on worthwhile courses of action, but also whether or not s/he is capable of undertaking them and what priority they might have (Archer, 2010, 2007). In deliberating about worthwhile courses of action and capabilities for undertaking them, teachers can examine their subjective knowledges about the discipline and effective teaching strategies within it.

Unless teachers examine and articulate their internal conversations and deliberations, their professional actions may remain morphostatic, even in cases where change or transformation is necessary for improved outcomes. Thus, it is crucial to include the element of reflexivity in any representation of professionalism to foreground the importance of understanding the ways in which teachers mediate their subjective and objective circumstances and make the decisions that they do.

Context and Methods

In many countries around the world, there is an enormous interest politically and administratively in identifying, codifying and applying professional standards of practice to the teaching profession (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996 p. 4). Australia, for example, has embarked on a vigorous campaign across states to develop and evaluate professional standards in teaching. According to Bloomfield (2006; 2009), policy documents in Australia signal an escalating agenda of a new discourse linking professionalism with quality teaching and learning within a so-called necessary framework of professional standards (see also Thomas, 2011). Bloomfield (2006) suggests that these structures and processes of explicit accountability and standardisation result in a particular form of the teacher professional becoming legitimated. Australia is not alone on this standards journey with reports from Furlong, Barton et al. (2000) and Leaton Gray and Whitty (2010) from the UK claiming that policy initiatives in the 1980s and 1990s were framed to change teacher professionalism. Day and Smethem (2009) argue that the reforms in England over the past two decades are characterised by their frequency and intensity, leading to significantly increased workloads and technicisation of the profession (Beck, 2009; Evans, 2011). The UK government maintains that policies were developed in response to concerns over teacher supply and necessary accountability measures for initial teacher education. Similar politics are underpinning accountability regimes in Australia, particularly the move towards professional standards. Bloomfield (2006) concludes that such policy shifts create a climate of increased surveillance and conformity with particular (government endorsed) versions of teacher quality and teacher professionalism being privileged (Evans, 2011; Thomas, 2011).

Policy discourses are forms of social practice subject to particular rules and transformations through which particular representations of 'truth' and self are constructed within particular power relations (Ball, 1994). They work to define not only what can be said and thought but also about who can speak, where, when and with what authority (Ball, 1994). Therefore, policy discourses on teacher professionalism or teacher quality define both what a professional teacher should be like as well as what quality teaching can and should be (Leaton Gray & Whitty, 2010; Thomas, 2011). Both Australia and the UK now have national professional standards for teachers. The purpose of these standards is linked to quality, accountability and clarity of expectations across a teaching career. The Preamble of the Australian standards, developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2011) provides an argument about the impact of quality teachers on student learning outcomes. The excerpt below summarises the purpose of the standards to achieve such quality:

> 'The development of professional standards for teachers that can guide professional learning, practice and engagement facilitates the improvement of teacher quality and contributes positively to the public standing of the profession. The key elements of quality teaching are described in the National Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards). They articulate what teachers are expected to know and be able to do at four career stages: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead.'

The Introduction to the UK standards, which apply in England and Wales (Training and Development Agency for Schools, 2007) provides a similar rationale in relation

to expectations across a career, yet doesn't articulate the aim to achieve quality or public standing:

> 'Professional standards are statements of a teacher's professional attributes, professional knowledge and understanding, and professional skills. They provide clarity of the expectations at each career stage… The standards provide the framework for a teacher's career and clarify what progression looks like. As now, to access each career stage a teacher will need to demonstrate that he/she has met the relevant standards.'

These standards documents, positioned as they are to guide and evaluate teachers' professional practices in those countries, are analysed to identify the extent to which teachers are represented as reflexive professionals.

Analytical methods

The analytical method used is critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is concerned with the workings of power through discourse on three intertwined levels: the macro level of socio-historical ideologies and influences on teachers and teaching; the meso level of the contextual specificities of the textual occurrences (policy documents) and how these influence the discourse; and the micro level of the language choices that are used to represent particular groups and ideas. We use Fairclough's (2003, 1992) linguistic point of reference, that of Hallidayan (1978) systemic functional linguistics, which is concerned with the social character of text and the relationship between discourse and discursive practice. Our analysis here specifically focuses upon genre, discourse and style, including metaphor and semantic relations between clauses and

sentences, along with assumptions evident in these policy documents. We analyse linguistic transitivity processes and their participant realisations within the clause (who or what is involved, how teachers and teaching are positioned), as well as the use of modal adverbs to determine priority attributed to particular practices, which practices are afforded value or are excluded in these policy documents, and how this fits with broader social discourses of teaching, teacher professionalism and schooling. This ideational function of language is also interested in the meaning relationship between text and context (lexis). We analyse the lexical choices and collocations made in these documents to indicate how teachers are positioned through language, particularly in relation to reflective and reflexive practices.

Representations of professionalism: Two cases

Australian national standards for teachers

The overall or high-level semantic relations in the Australian *National Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) indicate a problem/solution structure. The title page text specifically refers to the government's 'commitment to teaching quality' and to 'the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality' as part of 'important national reforms'. The text is ambivalent about the actual problem – it does not explicitly state that teachers in Australia are of a poor quality, or engaging in poor quality practices, and it provides no evidence of this supposed lack of quality. It alludes to this problem of quality through the use of the verb 'improving', the object being 'teacher quality'. It presents the national standards as a proposed solution to this problem, despite a lack of evidence to support such a strategy, indicating an existential assumption (Fairclough, 2003) that a standards framework will improve quality. Such an assumption moves the focus away from teachers mediating their own knowledge,

concerns and contextual influences (Archer, 2007) to maintain or improve quality in relation to their own needs and the highly specific needs of their students. Instead, a genre of governance (Fairclough, 2003) is evident, which seeks to regulate what constitutes quality teachers and quality teaching practices in any context. Indeed, the document states: 'An effective teacher is able to integrate and apply knowledge, practice and professional engagement *as outlined in the descriptors* to create teaching environments in which learning is valued' (p.5, our emphasis). This represents clear parameters of effective teaching, which have been decided for teachers, and presented as a list of competencies that indicate 'what teachers should know and be able to do' (p.3). Thus, metaphors of marketisation and commodification are tied into this genre of governance, with the standards framework described as 'a mechanism for attracting, developing, recognising and retaining quality teachers' (p.1) and the suggestion that it 'could be used as the basis for a professional accountability model' (p.2). Metaphors are used in all kinds of discourses (including policy documents), and structure the way we think, act, believe and know in pervasive and often indiscernible ways (Fairclough, 1992; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Here, education is represented as a marketplace where teachers are assessed in terms of how they meet the demands of the market, and their skills and knowledges are quantified into lists of competencies to be measured. Salient identities of teachers as needing to be told what to do and how to 'be' a teacher are apparent in this document. There seems to be little representation of teachers within the discourse of 'new professionalism' (Goodson, 2000) which foregrounds professional judgements and includes the emotional (Osgood, 2006), as well as the social, cognitive and moral aspects of teaching. This more holistic view of professionalism aligns with Archer's (2007, 2010) approach to morphogenetic

reflexivity and Evans' (2011) behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual dimensions of professionalism.

The speech functions in a policy document such as this indicate, on the surface level, a 'knowledge exchange' (Fairclough, 2003), whereby they 'make explicit the knowledge, practice and professional engagement required across teachers' careers' and 'present a common understanding and language for discourse between teachers, teacher educators, teacher organisations, professional associations and the public' (p.2). This speech function is achieved through mostly declarative sentences throughout the document, with strong modality or commitment to truth. For example: 'The National Professional Standards for teachers are a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality. They define the work of teachers and make explicit the elements of high quality, effective teaching in 21st century schools which result in improved educational outcomes for students' (p.2). There is no room for alternative positions here. The definite article 'the' is used to signify that these 'elements' and no others indicate high quality teaching. However, the underlying *primary* speech function of this text is one of strategic action, or 'activity exchange' (Fairclough, 2003) where particular actions are required. That is, teachers are expected to *demonstrate* these competencies and knowledges so they can be reviewed and monitored by governments, registering authorities and the public. In this way, the document becomes a performative text (Butler, 1997) and highlights 'performative professionalism' (Beck, 2009) as it explicates the ways in which teachers will perform their roles within these discourses of governance and managerialism (Ball, 2003; Beck, 2009; Wilkins, 2011).

This document is situated more broadly in a genre chain of accountability and regulation. National testing regimes in Australia, and the associated 'My School' website (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011), which reports publicly on school performance in these tests, has made teaching a highly visible and monitored profession. Political discourses of 'transparency and choice' for parents, are used by the government to legitimate these strategic choices. There seems to be no regard for teachers' internal deliberations, dispositions or satisfaction with their practices, which are key elements of Archer's (2007) reflexive morphogenetic model. In keeping with a marketisation discourse, it is the consumers (parents a.k.a voters) who need to be satisfied, rather than the teachers.

There is some suggestion of reflective undertakings in the standards document. Terms such as 'responsive to students', 'select strategies to suit … characteristics of students…to improve student learning' are indicative of reflective teachers who use information at their disposal to plan effective courses of action. Reflexivity, however, must also involve teachers examining their own dispositions, needs, capabilities and worldviews, to develop satisfying and sustainable practices (Archer, 2007) in their ever-changing individual contexts. Whilst the Preamble states that teachers can 'judge the success of their learning and inform their self reflection and self assessment' (p. 1), this single reference to reflection is obscured by the broader semantic relations of the text, which legitimate specific subjective and objective concerns. That is, in relation to subjective or contextual factors, teachers are expected to be concerned about, for example, engaging parents in the educative process (p.13); managing classrooms in an orderly manner (p.14); and using ICT to engage learners (p.12) and so on. These are all represented as legitimate areas upon which to reflect (if indeed

teachers choose to reflect). In terms of objective or individual concerns, again teachers are provided with clear foci in order to plan their professional needs. They are expected to 'Use the National Professional Standards for Teachers…to identify and plan professional learning needs' (p.18). Reflection in this document is represented as a controlled activity, with ambiguous definitions and purposes. None of the standards suggest that reflexivity or deep reflection are priorities, nor do they identify strategies to support teachers to reflect in deep and transformative ways to develop satisfying and sustainable practices for both their students and themselves. A lack of guidance for transformative reflection, generally leads to superficial reflection, with no reflexive processes or possibilities for sustained change (Ryan, 2011).

The exclusion of reflexive deliberation is compounded by strong and frequent lexicalisation of managerial discourse. For example, the verb 'to evaluate' is used eleven times, sometimes co-located with 'to monitor' in statements such as 'evaluate the effectiveness of teaching' (p. 8) and 'monitor and evaluate the implementation of teaching strategies' (p. 11). The regularity of statements such as this is limited to highly accomplished and lead teachers in the career profile. Furthermore, to revise/review is used nine times, also restricted to the two upper career stages in statements such as 'work with colleagues to review, modify and expand their repertoire of teaching strategies' (p.12), 'conduct regular reviews' (p. 13), and 'revise reporting and accountability mechanisms' (p. 17). These standards promote hierarchical observation in a managerial discourse (Ball, 2003; Day & Smethem, 2009). Even though statements such as 'to meet the needs of students' indicate that these activities are taking place in the interests of improved student outcomes, the implication is that teachers higher on the career profile are watching the less experienced teachers to make them more useful and productive, rather than teachers

taking responsibility for their own development through morphogenetic reflexive processes.

UK professional standards for teachers

The overarching or high-level semantic relations in the UK *Professional Standards for Teachers* (TDA, 2007) indicate a cause and effect structure with a focus on teachers' career progression or advancement. The sub-heading of the document poses the rhetorical question 'Why sit still in your career?' and the Introduction (pp. 2-5) uses the term progress/ion/ive six times in relation to teachers' careers. Other similar terms are lexically linked to promote this advancement discourse, such as: aspire/ing (4 times); future development/application (4); seeking (2); work towards; move to; approaching. This discourse forms part of a genre of governance (Fairclough, 2003) to regulate teachers across a whole career, with a strong emphasis on self-governance for self-promotion. The metaphor of marketisation (Fairclough, 1992; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) is evident through terms such as 'contractual entitlement' (p.3), 'continuum of expectations' (p.3), 'performance management' (p.3) and 'occupational standards' (p.2). This clear 'managerial' (Sachs, 2003) or 'occupational' (Evetts, 2009) discourse forms part of a genre chain of standards for managing 'the whole school workforce' (p.2) including standards for teaching assistants, classroom assistants and leadership standards for head teachers (Leaton Gray & Whitty, 2010).

The standards are legitimated through rationalisation (Fairclough, 2003) or a discourse of rationality (Osgood, 2006) whereby institutionalised action is used as the reason for the standards to exist. That is, the document alludes to the teaching workforce as a well-oiled machine (clear standards and a continuum of expectations

for everyone), with everyone moving forward together (discourse of advancement) to build careers and 'demonstrate increasing effectiveness' (p.4). The existential assumption (Fairclough, 2003) that career advancement is the key goal for teachers is supported by the propositional assumption (Fairclough, 2003) that demonstration of this list of standards will lead to all teachers displaying appropriate professional attributes, professional knowledge and understanding, and professional skills… at every career stage' (p.2).

The reflexive or 'new professional' (Goodson, 2000) is not fore grounded in this document, with the term *reflect* used only once in the Introduction (p.3) in reference to teachers planning their future development to work towards becoming an Advanced Skills Teacher; and once under the first career level (Qualified Teacher Status) in relation to personal professional development (p.8). Reflection is represented as a low level skill, used only to work towards institutionally legitimate goals. It is superseded in subsequent career levels by 'evaluate their performance' and 'be prepared to adapt their practice…towards innovation' (p.16). This indicates little regard for deep reflection or reflexive deliberation (Archer, 2010) whereby teachers weigh up their objective concerns, alongside the subjective conditions that influence their decision-making, to plan satisfying and sustainable practices.

A management discourse permeates the document, with the term 'evaluate/ion', collocated with teacher performance, used nine times; 'meet/met/satisfy' standards used 21 times and 'demonstrate' used seven times throughout the document. A further lexical link to the genre of governance played out through managerial 'speak' is the frequent reference to teachers being 'assessed' (five times in the Introduction).

The speech function of this document is represented on the surface as 'knowledge exchange' (Fairclough, 2003), using declarative statements to officially explicate (through policy) the attributes, knowledge and skills that the community can expect from their teachers. The less explicit, yet more important speech function is one of 'activity exchange' (Fairclough, 2003) or a strategic communicative action, which expects particular kinds of behaviours (and aspirations) from teachers. There is a distinct hortatory element to policy texts such as this, which provides a blueprint for preferred and expected action. The performative (Butler, 1997) function of this text is indicated through the over-lexicalisation (Fairclough, 2003) of behavioural and material (doing) verbs (for example, demonstrate, communicate, provide, promote, establish, ensure, manage, review, plan, design, assess, act). 'Knowing' verbs (know, understand) represent propositional assumptions (Fairclough, 2003) about the preferred knowledge base for teachers, with the assumption that action will be taken if this is not the case. Teacher satisfaction or passion for their subject(s) or craft is excluded, as particular ways of thinking, being and doing are authorised as correct representations of teachers and teaching in these managerial professional standards (Day & Smethem, 2009; Evans, 2011). Osgood (2006) argues that in this construction of professionalism, there is 'little space for emotion' (p. 9). The 'discourse of emotionality'(Osgood, 2006 p.8) becomes marginalised.

Discussion and implications

The two professional standards documents analysed here have similarities in their genres of governance, discourses of marketisation, and speech functions of activity exchange (Fairclough, 2003). They each perform the social purpose of regulating and legitimating what counts as teacher professionalism, however they make their case in

linguistically different ways. The high level semantic relations establish different textual structures and consequently prioritise different themes to rationalise the existence of the standards. In the Australian document a problem/solution structure is used, promoting the assumption that a problem exists with teacher quality (and student learning), and that the standards will solve this ambiguous problem. In the UK document, a cause/effect structure is utilised to promote career advancement and a 'futures' discourse as the assumed positive effect of complying with, and demonstrating the standards. Managerialism and regulation are dominant discourses in both documents, and as such, neither of these documents prioritises the 'new (reflexive) professional' (Goodson, 2000) who is concerned with the emotional, social, cognitive and moral aspects of teaching or the behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual dimensions (after Evans, 2011). Rather, these documents metaphorically represent teachers as cogs in the bureaucratic machine, who need to be told what to do, what to know and how to be a 'good' teacher, with little acknowledgement of the complex subjective and objective influences on teachers' work.

In contrast, Evans (2011) argues that enacted professionalism, whereby teachers undertake professional development (in many forms) and then make decisions about what they enact to improve practice and outcomes, is the key to understanding and promoting high quality teaching in real terms. Ifanti and Fotopoulopou (2011) along with Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) similarly cite the importance of professional development as teachers build and shape their own identities as professionals in unique ways. Thus, the 'new' professional is a *reflexive professional* who can map out and justify their own professional development and practices, with regard to their own subjective interests and motivations, along with the objective needs of their students,

the profession and the communities in which they work. The reflexive professional is more likely to enact and sustain the discourses of quality teaching than one who simply follows government mandated standards with a tick-box mentality.

In the current climate of accountability, political manoeuvring, changing curriculum, increasingly diverse student cohorts, and community expectations, teachers, more than ever, need to hone their skills and abilities as reflective and reflexive practitioners. Valuing and prioritising such abilities through policy and blueprints for professional development and practice can encourage teachers to seek ways to develop these skills to negotiate the complex interspaces of educational demands and negotiate new possibilities for future practice. Unless teachers can reflexively mediate their subjective knowledges, beliefs and capabilities with these objective conditions within which they work, this continued pressure may lead to wholesale teacher attrition, apathy or robotic dependence on ‘one size fits all’ programs.

Conclusion

These findings suggest that governments in Australia and the UK are carefully attempting to shape teachers and the teaching profession through behavioural-heavy standards, with little regard for the attitudinal, emotional and intellectual dimensions of the trustworthy professional. However, as Evans (2011) argues, it is in the enactment of professionalism that we see real change or improvement in quality teaching. Enacted professionalism requires reflexive mediation, whereby teachers know how to map out their own professional development and practice by mediating subjective concerns (their own priorities, beliefs etc), with objective concerns (students’, school, community and system needs) to make the best decisions in and for

specific contexts. Thus, the overarching professional capability should be one of reflexivity.

Rather than a list of standards, we need a radical rethink around the processes and forms of evidence that denote professionalism and indicate quality teaching. Professional reflexivity can be explicitly mapped by competent and trustworthy professionals. The reflexive professional can account for the ways in which they are developing their professional behaviours, attitudes and intellectuality (after Evans, 2011) within the subjective and objective conditions (Archer, 2010) in which they work. They can indicate what they consider to be 'effective' or 'engaging' or 'supportive' practices in their context and why; they can use evidence to show why they make the decisions and take the actions that they do. The reflexive professional is concerned with quality, but on their own terms. Governments will always be concerned about accountability, but we argue that teachers as reflexive professionals can be the drivers of quality rather than 'tick-box' professionals who present the veneer of quality.

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