Trans/forming Teachers: New Professional Learning and Transformative Teacher Professionalism

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ABSTRACT
This paper focuses upon the development of transformative teacher professionalism. It explores issues of teacher professional identity and the ways in which this is contributed to by teacher responsiveness to the changing and demanding educational environments in which they find themselves. It includes a review of significant literature within the field and suggests ways in which professional learning can support the development of a transformative teaching profession. Finally, it points to a number of conditions under which such a profession might emerge.

Introduction

This paper aims to make links between the development of 'new professional learning' strategies and the notion of 'transformative teacher professionalism'. It argues, along with others, that in the face of ever increasing calls for effectiveness, efficiency, 'bottom line improvements', measurability and accountability to a narrow set of standards and expectations, the best and most important teaching is that which sees its aim as the transformation of society through the contribution it makes to the formation of human beings who think critically, act ethically and seek justice throughout their lives. It asks questions about the constitution of the type of transformative teacher professionalism out of which such teachers operate and suggests ways in which teacher professional learning can support the development and work of such teachers. It draws, in part, on the experience of teachers within the Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools and concludes by suggesting some conditions and cultures within which transformative teacher professionalism might flourish.

Transformative Teacher Professionalism

The terrain of teacher professionalism is highly contested, particularly within the context of industrial negotiations between teachers and employers. It would seem, however, that teachers and employers are not the only stakeholders in the struggle over teacher professionalism, but that governments, teacher unions, parent and community groups and universities all play significant roles. The issue of 'control' is highly salient, with debate centering around who should and conversely, who should not be able to control the agenda relating to teachers' work and professionalism.

Much doubt has been cast upon the appropriateness of the application of "classical professionalism" to the teaching profession, although this model of professionalism is still prevalent in much government policy and some scholarship (see, for example, (Hargreaves, 1996; 1998; Shulman 1987). This type of professionalism rests on the existence of a body of technical knowledge and skills which belong exclusively to those within the profession. Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) argue that in attempts to measure up to the 'real professions' (i.e. medicine and law), educationists have sought to quantify and codify teachers' professional knowledge. Attempts to do so, beginning with (for example) the development of such notions as 'pedagogical content knowledge' (Shulman 1986) have been instrumental in the development of 'professional standards' across the western world and also in attempts to reduce the teaching and learning process to a level of scientific certainty (Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996:6), leading Hugh Sockett (1987) and others to argue that the development of such a scientific knowledge base for teaching denies the contextual, emotional, reflexive and iterative elements which are so integral to teaching done well – in short, to deny the craft and artistry of the profession.

The discourse of instrumentalism, on the other hand, has emerged as a significant backdrop to discussions of teacher professionalism and teacher professional identity, and is linked closely to issues of control of teachers through the promotion of certain behaviours and iterations of teacher professionalism. The discourse has emerged on three linked fronts, each with practical

implications for teacher professionalism through the promotion of 'what works' in the classroom, namely educational research, evidence-based practice and teacher education. David Hargreaves, in his 1996 Teacher Training Agency lecture lamented the lack of 'value for money' in publicly funded educational research and called for educational researchers to concentrate their efforts on 'what works' in the classroom, so as to systematically begin the codification of teachers technical knowledge and skill for the purpose of cataloguing and subsequently dispersing 'best practice' amongst the entire profession (Hargreaves, 1996). Hargreaves clearly was advocating a 'classical' approach to professionalism, to use Goodson and Hargreaves' (1996) terminology. At the same time an approach to 'practical professionalism' (Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996:11ff) was inherent in his call for teaching to become an 'evidence-based' profession such as medicine, where being 'evidence-based' is predicated upon a positivistic understanding of 'evidence' as leading to scientific certainty in relation to 'what works'. In a subsequent work, David Hargreaves writes, in the context of a discussion of the impact of New Labour on the educational policy environment in the UK "there is another element in the new government's approach which gives rise to optimism, namely its pragmatic approach to 'what works' and to the rapid dissemination of 'good practice' throughout the education service" (Hargreaves, 1999:245). A key to understanding Hargreaves' particular perspective on teachers and their work can perhaps best be found in his assertion that "government can help [teachers adapt to change] by reconceptualizing the role and professional identity of teachers and by providing conditions under which they can adapt successfully to these changes" (Hargreaves, 1998). The key assumption underpinning this statement, (also present in other work, such as Hargreaves, 1994), namely that teacher professionalism and teacher professional identity are tools for government control rather than teacher agency highlights the conservatism and narrowness of Hargreaves' arguments.

The discourse of 'what works' has been roundly criticised by scholars, most of whom have been helpfully classified by Hargreaves as "postmodern hermits" (1999:242). Martyn Hammersley (1997), Tony Edwards (1996) and Harvey Goldstein (1996) have attacked the narrow notions of 'evidence' upon which comparisons between education and medicine have been predicated, arguing that greater expenditure is the key to improving any deficiencies which may exist in educational research.

Goodson and Hargreaves have offered seven principles of 'postmodern' professionalism', which seek to extend the debate on teacher professionalism beyond "the recent clamour for technical competency and subject knowledge" (p.20). Abbreviated, they are:
- Increased opportunity and responsibility to exercise discretionary judgement;
- Opportunities and expectations to engage with the moral and social purposes and value of what teachers teach;
- Commitment to working with colleagues in collaborative cultures of help and support;
- Occupational heteronomy rather than self-protective autonomy;
- A commitment to active care and not just anodyne service for students;
- A self-directed search and struggle for continuous learning related to one's own expertise and standards of practice, and
- The creation and recognition of high task complexity. (p.21)

These principles, echoed elsewhere (Fullan and Hargreaves 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Sachs, 1997), attend primarily to those aspects of teaching which defy quantification and codification. Elizabeth Atkinson has argued (2000) vehemently 'in defence of ideas', offering that " a narrow focus on 'what works' will close the door that leads to new possibilities, new strategies, new ways of reframing and reconceiving the educational enterprise" (p.328). Jill Blackmore (2002) has applied the discussion to the Australian context, arguing that evidence-based practice, particularly the model derived from medicine, fails to capture the complexity of the education context, especially with relation to the theory-practice dynamic and relationships between education policy, research and practice. Further on, she argues for the employment of research-based policy and practice, implying a version of teacher professionalism not unlike Hargreaves and Goodson's 'postmodern professionalism' in her statement that:

"Research based practice works through the theory practice dynamic critically, and it is that criticality that is crucial for a knowledge based democracy which takes into account the social and cultural as well as the scientific and technological. It requires researchers to problem set and not just problem solve, to be strategic as well as relevant. It requires from teachers as practitioner researchers another level of professional judgement that derives from the theoretical underpinnings of their disciplinary field of practice." (Blackmore 2002: 17)

In the context of the United States, the discourse of instrumentalism in education is perhaps best demonstrated by the words of the current President in the 2000 pre-election debate, "You must have mandatory testing. You must say that if you receive money, you must show us whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract...Testing is the cornerstone of reform" (New York Times, 2000, quoted in Cochran-Smith 2001). The instrumentalist approach has been subject to sustained critique in the US by scholars such as Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Michael Apple. In relation to what she terms "the outcomes question" (2001, 2002), Cochran-Smith has argued that:

"we need to keep in mind how we will be measured by our own measures. As researchers, practitioners and policy makers in teaching and teacher education, we will not measure up unless we preserve a place for critique in the face of consensus, unless we keep at the center of teacher education rich and complex understandings of teaching and learning that are not easily reducible to algorithms, unless we acknowledge that although teachers have a critical role in educational reform, they alone are neither the saviors nor the culprits in what is wrong with American schools and American society, and unless we remain vigilant in demanding time and space on the outcomes agenda not just for professional discussions about meeting the needs of all students but for deep interrogation of questions related to diversity, equity, access, and racism. At this critical juncture in the reform and development of teacher education, if we do not take control of framing the outcomes in teacher education, then the outcomes will surely frame us and undermine our work as teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and policy makers committed to a democratic vision of society and to the vital role that teachers and teacher educators play in that vision. (Cochran-Smith 2002:14-15)

Apple has likewise tied the rise of the instrumentalist discourse to the stifling of diversity and deskilling of teachers, arguing in a manner reminiscent of Anthony Giddens' (1994) notion of 'manufactured uncertainty' that the intensification of teachers work has taken the focus off the essential task of fostering critical literacy in students and made the implementation of 'what works' the key focus of teachers' work (Apple 2000:118-119).

These instrumentalist discourses hold quite specific implications for teacher professionalism, in that they point to the emergence of professional identities not unlike 'classical professionalism' but with greater possibility for state and/or other control emanating from outside the profession. Proponents of the 'what works' approach generally endorse a 'death by best practice' model of teacher professional learning, where teachers are required to master a repertoire of 'best practice' established in less than generative, collaborative ways.

Recent literature on teacher professionalism has centred on the development of types of teacher professionalism which provide for transformation, activism or the exercise of civic responsibility (Groundwater-Smith and Sachs 2002; Hargreaves, 2000; Kennedy 2003; Sachs 2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2003). Informed by the work of sociologists such as Manuel Castells and Anthony Giddens, this work draws on the thinking of the past decade in relation to the impact of the 'network society', the social uncertainty produced by various elements and manifestations of the postmodern age, the associated growth of fundamentalism (religious, market and other) to suggest a response for the teaching profession. Similar to Goodson and Hargreaves' 'postmodern professionalism' outlined above, these constructions of professionalism refuse to yield to narrow typologies of teachers' work, instead posing links between teachers work and their broader social and civic responsibilities.

Sachs (2003:16) offers a summary of the characteristics of transformative or 'activist' teacher professionalism as follows:
- Inclusive in its membership
- Working to a public ethical code of practice
- Collaborative and collegial
- Activist in its orientation
- Flexible and progressive
- Responsive to change
- Self-regulating
- Policy-active
- Enquiry-orientated
- Knowledge building

She continues on to warn that "transformative professionalism should not become an orthodoxy which is imposed on the teaching profession…the move for transformative professionalism must come from the membership of the profession and be supported by other interest groups and stakeholders…its singular strength is that it is concerned with mutual engagement around a joint enterprise, namely improving student learning outcomes". In this belief as much as in other ways, this vision of teacher professionalism differs from those emerging from instrumentalist discourses. The opening of spaces and the development of opportunities for professional learning are important aspects of the required support Sachs refers to.

There are many reasons why this new iteration of teacher professionalism is crucial for the wellbeing of the teaching profession, education and society broadly at the current historical juncture. A transformative teaching profession sees its primary responsibility in terms of the development of critical, literate, socially aware citizens with a strong sense of their own civic responsibility, and through them the generation of social capital and the propagation of civil society. Conversely, there are various pressures and other societal phenomena which provide barriers to and in some cases work actively against the development of such a teaching force, both overtly and incidentally. The remainder of this paper considers what the necessary professional learning needs might be of an emerging transformative teaching profession and the conditions and cultures required to foster such learning experiences and environments.

Trans/forming Teachers: 'New' Professional Learning
In a time when prevailing notions of teacher professional learning still largely equate with 'spray on'[1] (Mockler 2001) or 'drive by' (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, *et.al.* 2000) experiences, it is salient to revisit Susan Loucks-Horsley et al's (Loucks-Horsley, Harding, *et.al.* 1987) principles of teacher professional learning, offered almost 20 years ago now. They were:
- Collegiality and collaboration
- Experimentation and risk-taking
- Incorporation of available knowledge bases
- Appropriate participant involvement in goal setting, implementation, evaluation and decision making
- Time to work on staff development and assimilate new learnings
- Leadership and sustained administrative support
- Appropriate incentives and rewards
- Designs built on principles of adult learning and the change process
- Integration of individual goals with school goals
- Formal placement of the program within the philosophy and organisational structure of the school

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[1] [1] A term initially used in conversation by Serena Vecchiet, Director of Teaching and Learning, MLC School, Sydney, Australia.

In the context of our time and the emergence of a transformative teacher professionalism, I would also add:
- Opportunities to (in the secondary school in particular) build both discipline knowledge and pedagogical expertise
- Opportunities to develop an understanding of the broader social context of teachers' work and the implications of this context for pedagogy and practice.

While I would not wish to claim that professional learning experiences which temporarily remove teachers from their school communities, offer networking opportunities and expose them to recent theoretical and practical perspectives on teaching and learning, are intrinsically poor in terms of the potential they offer for improving student learning outcomes, much depends on the school context within which this type of professional learning occurs and the scope for collaboration and debrief with colleagues and integration and assimilation of learnings. The principles offered above point to the need for a different type of professional learning to emerge.

Bodies which seek to regulate, accredit and register members of the teaching profession such as the Institute of Teachers in New South Wales[2] and others within Australia and elsewhere have the potential to contribute significantly to the teaching profession through the provision of pathways for professional growth and development and the adoption of a supporting stance for the emergence of a transformative teaching profession. Whether the promise of the initial vision of the NSW Institute will be fulfilled remains to be seen, however, and although the Draft Professional Teaching Standards published in 2003 are framed in ways which could be enacted generatively, as Kennedy (2003) has observed of the Victorian equivalent, "they are capable of being expanded into ever increasing detail eventually leading to processes for monitoring and assessment". Such an approach could be counter to the development of a transformative teaching profession, feeding directly into an ideology which sits much more comfortably with the instrumentalist discourses discussed above.

Over the past five years studies regarding the Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools (Groundwater-Smith 2001), the development of evidence based practice within them (Groundwater-Smith and Hunter 2000), and the dilemmas experienced by those acting to facilitate practitioner enquiry (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler 2002), have been presented and published. As well, attention has been paid to particular methodologies (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler 2003) that the Coalition has found to be successful and the ways in which this work might assist in the formation and transformation of teacher professional identity (Mockler and Sachs 2002)[3].

In effect the Coalition has committed itself to:
- Developing and enhancing the notion of evidence based practice
- Developing an interactive community of practice using appropriate technologies
- Making a contribution to a broader professional knowledge base with respect to educational practice
- Building research capability within and between schools by engaging both teachers and students in the research process
- Sharing methodologies which are appropriate to practitioner enquiry as a mean of transforming teacher professional learning

Schools within the coalition seek to develop pathways for professional learning which respond to the principles offered above, by providing ongoing opportunities for teachers to share their

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[2] The NSW Institute of Teachers is a recently established body responsible for regulating the teaching profession and accrediting teachers in NSW. The Institute has been established over the past 5 years as a response to a major review of teacher education undertaken by the state government in 1999. It is one of a number of such bodies in operation in Australia, others including the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration and the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
[3] A full list of publications relating to the Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools can be obtained by contacting the Centre for Practitioner Research within the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney

practice with each other, conduct independent and corporate inquiry into classroom practice and broader school practices, seek and listen to student voice, read, value and integrate research findings into their work and share their work broadly across a group of enormously diverse schools. Currently there are eight schools in the Coalition: three Independent Girls' Schools, two Government Girls High Schools, one Government Boys High Schools and two Government Public Schools. They are all in Metropolitan Sydney and are to be found in suburbs to the North, West and East of the central business district. They embrace both wealthy and well provisioned schools and ones that are facing serious socio-economic challenges. In important ways, in its very functioning, the coalition manages to break down some of the traditional barriers between different 'types' of schools through engaging teachers in consideration of issues and concerns which are central to their joint enterprise.

While there can be no doubt that there are groups of transformative professionals operating within each of the schools within the coalition, and also that the coalition itself represents a context within which the growth of transformative professionalism might take place, there are a number of conditions and cultures both within schools and within society generally without which the goals of transformative professionalism are unlikely to be met. These conditions both foster the opportunities for professional learning necessary for the development of transformative professionals and also allow for that professional learning to be authentic and congruent with the aims and practices of the school.

Toward Conditions and Cultures for Trans/forming Teachers
I wish to propose here a number of conditions and aspects of culture which I see as essential for the development of transformational professionalism. These elements are necessary on both a macro and a micro scale, needing to exist both within schools and society more broadly in order to produce transformation on both an individual and a profession-wide basis. Each of these elements is in some senses interdependent on the others, although I wish to name them individually here and briefly discuss what they might 'look like' in a school and broader social setting.

The erosion of social trust within the current context is well documented and debated (see, for example (Cvetkovich and Lofstedt 1999; Fukuyama 1999; Misztal 1996). Many factors are said to be brought to bear on this erosion of trust, among them the rise of the 'network society' (Castells 1997), the development of 'manufactured uncertainty' (Giddens 1994) and the growth in global terrorism (Combs 2003). In addition, the growing popularity of fundamentalist approaches to religion, economics and other elements of social life is representative of the search for 'black and white' answers in the face of an uncertain world. The culture of instrumentalism discussed in the first section of this paper is similar to fundamentalism in this respect, in its aim to eradicate nuance and provide 'common sense' and simple answers to complex questions.

Within education, this erosion of trust can be seen in the current fixation on 'standards', measurement and accountability to a set of rather narrow parameters and 'norms'. In the NSW context, the recent increase in content requirements across junior secondary school courses, despite the Board of Studies' own mandate to develop a curriculum which was flexible, emphasised metacognition and promoted authentic assessment, is one example of this, as is the gradual creeping towards a 'league table' model of classifying schools and the ongoing tyranny of 'best practice' in Australia and elsewhere throughout the western world. Within schools individually and systemically, an increase in managerialism and the appropriation of commercial language and values can be observed, both of which are in some way representative of this erosion of trust.

Giddens (1994) points to the need for the development of what he terms 'active trust' in response to the 'detraditionalising' of social institutions (such as education) where the expectation that processes will unfold in age-old ways can no longer be met. Active trust is defined by Giddens as "trust in others or in institutions that has to be actively produced and negotiated". Active trust involves a deliberate 'leap of faith', and this is a particularly salient message in relation to

educational institutions, where the 'one side of the teacher's desk' (Lortie 1975) experience prevails for many in the face of new and emerging pedagogies and approaches.

The development of a transformative teaching profession requires a reinstatement of trust, at both a local and a global level, allowing teachers to act with autonomy, to openly acknowledge their learning needs and to work collaboratively with other teachers to constantly develop their understanding and expertise.

Linked to the development of active trust is an openness to risk-taking. Risk is often seen as the 'flip side' to trust (Misztal 1996), and its minimisation or eradication is one of the central aims of the 'audit society' (Power 1999). Managerialist discourses currently prevalent within society generally and increasingly present within the educational sphere draw upon and in turn feed into the ideology of the audit society, and much of the increase in the density of syllabus requirements and student learning outcomes over recent years can be linked to the minimisation of risk.

Transformative teacher professionalism seeks to develop teachers who are creative developers of curriculum and innovative pedagogues. Transformative teachers value divergent and risky thinking in themselves, their colleagues and their students, and in doing so assist students in the development of their own critical and transformative capacities. Transformative teachers also collaborate at a deep level with colleagues, students and other stakeholders, and necessary for such collaboration is a willingness to be open to change and transformation in themselves. Such willingness comes only with a readiness to take risks in opening oneself up to others, in 'being real'. Implicit in transformative teacher professionalism is a strongly held belief that ultimate responsibility for learning rests with the learner, and as such transformative teachers take an enormous risk in devolving that responsibility and developing new ways of supporting and sustaining learning.

The development of a transformative teaching profession requires an education community which on both school and system levels not only tolerates risk-taking but embraces it as a path to authentic relationship, critical and innovative practice and ongoing growth and transformation.

Finally, we will not have a transformative teaching profession without courageous leadership, at both school and systemic level. The dearth of visionary or transformative leadership on a global level at this point in human history will be well documented in History, both political and social. Within schools, the development of transformative professionals will depend on the emergence of leaders who are willing to be transformative themselves – to build trust, to take risks, to think critically and to act with integrity. The development of a transformative teaching profession will rely heavily on the willingness of those in leadership roles to adopt an activist identity (Sachs 2003) where the best path for growth and development diverges from that set by the state, to nurture talent without feeling threatened, to work collaboratively for improvement without judging harshly, and to foster real autonomy through holding appropriate expectations and exercising trust in the capacity of others.

A transformative teaching profession cannot emerge without sustained and comprehensive support from educational leaders, within schools, systems, universities and government. Such a profession is not only desirable but essential for the re-establishment of social responsibility as a guiding social principle, the reclaiming of our humanity and the ongoing growth and development of civil society. We may not achieve these goals, of course, solely with the development of a transformative teaching profession, but without one we are unlikely to even come close.

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