

Raising the Professionalism of Teachers?

Content Elements for Post-initial Master's Level Programs

Author(s)

Snoek, Marco

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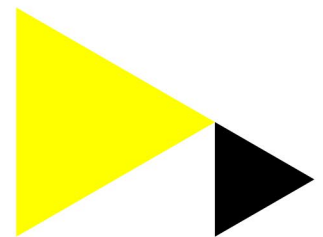
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Theories on and concepts of professionalism of teachers and their consequences for the curriculum in teacher education¹

Marco Snoek, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Teachers are confronted with a mixture of expectations.

On the one hand they are expected to meet the minimum standards for teachers. Concerns about the quality of teachers has lead to more strict and explicit definitions of the minimum standards that teacher have to meet and the knowledge base they must be able to use.

On the other hand, teachers are confronted with high expectations of society with respect to their professionalism. Extended professionalism and continuous professional development of teachers are emphasized in national and European debates (European Council 2009). This raises the question whether the curricula in teacher education prepare teachers to meet those wider expectations.

To answer that question, it is necessary to clarify what qualities those wider expectations imply. In this paper we translate the wider expectations towards the professionalism of teachers into explicit qualities that teachers need. This translation is done through a survey of literature on professionalism that has been published in the last decade.

The elements that come out of this survey only receive limited attention in existing standards and curricula for teachers. Teacher educators face the challenge to adopt their curricula to the wider expectations of society and to educate teachers that can take their wider professional role.

Expected qualities of teachers

Teachers are considered the most important in-school impact factor on the quality of student achievement. In the McKinsey report *How the world's best-performing schoolsystems come out on top* this is stated clearly: 'The available evidence suggests that the main driver of the variation in student learning at school is the quality of the teachers' (Barber and Mourshed 2007: p12). Based on a large scale survey on factor influencing learning outcomes of pupils, Hattie (2009) suggests that the quality of teachers has a larger impact on the learning of pupils than the quality of the curriculum, the teaching methods, the school building or the role of parents. As a result of the widely acknowledged importance of teachers, much attention is given to policies with respect to teacher quality, both on a national and the European level. The European Council and the European Commission have published policy documents and recommendations for quality improvement of teachers and teacher education and stimulate national governments to invest in the improvement of teacher quality (Commission 2005, 2007; European Council 2007, 2009).

The need to invest in the quality of teachers is based on the challenges that national governments face with respect to their education systems. Changes in society have lead to new challenges for schools. A CEDEFOP study shows the expected changes in jobs in Europe, shifting 'away from primary industries (especially agriculture) and from traditional manufacturing industries towards services and knowledge intensive jobs' (CEDEFOP 2008). Changes in society and the ambition to invest in the stability of society has lead to a redefinition of key competences for lifelong learning (European Council 2006), which include transversal competences like digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression.

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The focus on inclusive education and competence-based curricula in secondary schools has led to a stronger attention for personalised teaching and learning (OECD 2007). All these changes ask for considerable changes in the school curriculum and in the daily teaching of teachers. While teachers play a key role in implementing these changes in the schools, the changes are not the responsibility of individual teachers, but of the collective community of teachers in schools. This has led to concepts like professional learning communities and collaborative learning and focus on leadership and innovation strategies. The need to increase learning outcomes within limited resources has led to an increased interest in evidence on the effectiveness of educational practices. Teachers are considered as knowledge workers that take an active part in the development of evidence based professional knowledge through engagement in research and self-study.

The expectations that society has towards teachers and their professionalism are large. Teachers are challenged to show extended professionalism (Stenhouse 1975) and a wider perspective on their role within schools. This wider perspective on the teacher's role is also recognized in the TALIS survey on professional development activities of teachers:

Additional "content" is introduced for the professional development that is more or less integrated in everyday school practice and envisages a broader spectrum of teachers' functions, which emphasises their role as members of modern professional organisations along with their teaching role. Here, concepts such as the "reflective practitioner" or the "school as a learning organisation" are frequently mentioned and teachers' roles in "secondary" processes are emphasised. This additional emphasis on secondary roles is also promoted as part of the modernisation of the teaching profession. They include teachers as researchers, as receivers of feedback from colleagues, as innovators, as active colleagues, as collaborators of principals, and as manifesting what is sometimes called "teacher leadership". (European Commission 2010: 191)

This raises the question to what extent the curricula in teacher education prepare for this secondary role. To answer this question, it is necessary to take a closer look at the qualities that those wider expectations imply. As the elements of that secondary role have much in common with Stenhouse's and Hoyle's concept of extended professionalism (Hoyle 1975, Stenhouse 1975), we will answer this question by analyzing the concept of professionalism through a survey of the literature on professionalism that has been published in the last decade.

We will start with a short introduction on the concept of professionalism. Next, five perspectives on professionalism that have been found in the literature will be elaborated. In the final part of the paper, the outcomes of the literature survey will be summarized in a list of essential characteristics of professionals. This list can be used to analyze existing curricula with respect to the extent in which they prepare their students for professionalism in education and to find possible elements to strengthen the focus on professionalism of teachers within those curricula.

Analysing professionalism of teachers

The study of professions and professionalism has a long standing tradition in sociological research from the beginning of the 20th century (Evetts 2006, Crook, 2008). Sociologists have

tried to identify the specific values that are connected to professions and at the same time tried to identify criteria to separate professions from other types of occupations.

As in most debates on professions and on professionalism the characteristics of professions are connected to positive and prestigious elements, many occupations have tried to identify their professionalism, thus trying to become part of the elite.

This applies also to teachers. In many publications that are focused on teachers, the use of the term educational professional is used deliberately to indicate and emphasize the prestige and status of the teacher. Teacher policies are full of ‘professional standards’, ‘professional development’, ‘professional communities’, etc.

In many of those publications it is unclear whether the concept of teacher professionalism is considered as an indication of the status quo or as an ideal concept that is worthwhile to strive for.

As a result the concepts of profession and professionalism have become diffuse and lack conceptual clarity.

In this paper we will use the following definitions (Evetts 2009, Koster 2002, Hargreaves 2000):

- Profession: a distinct category of occupational work
- Professionalisation: a process in which a professional group pursues, develops, acquires and maintains more characteristics of a profession
- Professionalism: the conduct, demeanour and standards which guide the work of professionals.

In the past century, the sociological discourse on professions and on the professionalism of teachers has used different and shifting perspectives, emphasizing different aspects of professionalism (Evetts 2006).

In our study of relevant literature on professions, we have identified five different perspectives on professionalism:

Archetypes and attributes

One way of looking at the professionalism of teachers is by comparing them to classical professions like doctors or lawyers and to identify similarities and differences. Using these classical professions as ideal examples, typical characteristics were derived which could be used to separate between professions and non-professions and to identify similarities or differences with other occupations. In this approach, the focus is on identifying categories for occupational classification (Gewirtz et al 2009), where the classical professions are considered as archetypes of ‘true professions’.

Typical attributes are (Snoek, Swennen and Van der Klink 2009):

- Professional autonomy, through professional monopoly of the members of the profession who have control over their own work
- Control over entry requirements to the profession and the further professional development of the individual members. Professions also have the power to judge, and subsequently even to exclude, members who do not keep to the professional standards and ethical code of that profession.
- An ethical code as a means to win the trust of the public and public bodies (often governments) that have the power to license the profession and its members; and to serve as a guideline for good conduct of the members of that particular profession.
- A strong academic knowledge base (Abbott 1988), consisting of formal or technical knowledge (Goodson and Hargreaves 1996). “*Academic knowledge legitimises professional work by clarifying its foundations and tracing them to major cultural*

values. In most modern professions, these have been the values of rationality, logic, and science. Academic professionals demonstrate the rigor, the clarity, and the scientifically logical character of professional work” (Abbott 1988: 54).

- Freedom of establishment. Members do not have a job contract but are independent and self employed.

When the teaching profession is held against the framework of characteristics of the classical professions, the conclusion is clear: teaching can not be regarded as a true profession. Teachers do not control the entrance to their occupation, they have no freedom of establishment, but are employed by schools. As a result teachers have only limited autonomy over their work. In many countries there is no ethical code for teachers. Also the academic level of the teaching profession is considered by many authors as limited (Verbiest 2007). It is still relatively rare for teachers to be research trained and to have carried out post-graduate studies (Erixon, Frånberg and Kallós 2001). As a result, teaching, like nursing, social work and librarianship, is often called a semi-profession (Etzioni 1969).

Although the fact that the comparison with classical professions is widely used in debates on professionalism, this approach is also criticized. Professionalism defined in this way is seen as an artificial construct with always contested definitions (Crook 2008), a shifting phenomenon reflecting whatever people think it is at a particular time (Hanlon 1998). It seems more useful to explore the characteristics to the teaching profession today, than comparing it to some proposed ideal (Whitty 2008).

The professionalisation project

A second way of looking at professionalism is by strengthening the ‘professionalisation project’ (Larson 1977) with the emphasis on the development of a professional body that restricts the entrance to the profession, thus creating and maintaining a monopoly position from which the profession can safeguard its quality and be involved in debates about power, influence, status and bargains about working conditions and professional autonomy.

In this perspective, the focus is not on an idealized concept that acts as a frame of reference to judge all occupations that want to call themselves profession, but on the process of growing self-awareness of an occupational group, on professionalism as an aspirational target (Power 2008).

In this process the focus can be on the development of the knowledge base of a profession, on the improvement of standards for professional performance, on restricting the unlicensed entrance into the profession, the development of mechanisms for self-control and self-accountability and on defining ethical codes to emphasize explicit professional virtues.

Examples of such professionalisation projects can be seen in several professions who have developed their own societies, professional journals and ethical codes like journalists (Crook 2008), teacher educators in The Netherlands (Koster 2002) and in the present development of a professional register for teachers in The Netherlands.

In this approach the characteristics of classical professions are used as a frame of reference for development instead of judgement.

In discussions on the professionalisation projects, two different perspectives are used, one focussing on idealistic conceptions emphasising specialist and ethical virtues (like trustworthiness, collegiality, service), and another focussing on exclusionary and self-interested aspects focussed on market closure, status and power (Larson 1977), leading to negotiations and bargains with governments over professional mandates, influence, jurisdictional competitions and working conditions. (Gewirtz et al 2009).

The idealistic conception can contribute to the increase of societal trust in a profession, while the critical conceptions can easily lead to the reduction of societal trust in a profession.

High expectations in modern society

A third way of looking at professionalism of teachers is by focusing on expectations in the present day competitive society. Present day post-modern and neo-liberal society can be characterized by a strong emphasis on economic and technological changes. Economic changes have led to a stronger globalized, market oriented and competitive perspective with stronger central regulations (Gewirtz et al 2009). This changing market oriented context for society and schools has resulted in changes in the expectations not only towards school leaders, but also towards teachers, emphasizing accountability, rationality, competitiveness and control. (Evans 2008; Goodson and Hargreaves 1996; Robertson 1996).

'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'.' (Hargreaves 2000: 168).

In this approach the term 'new professionalism' is often used, indicating that the changing context of schools asks for a change in qualities expected from professionals, with a focus on effectivity, accountability, national safeguarding and control:

- A strong focus on the quality of work and a stronger emphasis on output requirements.
- Public accountability, where teachers have to explicate how their teaching contributes to achieving the intended learning outcomes.
- Implementation of standards describing competences and qualifications of beginners and expert members of professions. For the OECD, the development of such standards has a high priority:

'The overarching priority is for countries to have in place a clear and concise statement or profile of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do. This is necessary to provide the framework to guide initial teacher education, teacher certification, teachers' ongoing professional development and career advancement, and to assess the extent to which these different elements are being effective.' (OECD 2005: 131)

Most of these standards have been developed by national governments with limited or no involvement of teachers (Snoek et al 2009).

Especially in England it has been argued that these features of new professionalism lead to a de-professionalisation of teachers and an over-emphasis on the role of managers (Whitty 2008, Hargreaves 2000).

At the same time, the knowledge society and technological changes with its 'instantaneous, globalized availability of information and entertainment' (Hargreaves 2000) ask for other qualities of modern professions:

- Increased attention to the life-long professional development of professionals throughout their careers. It is generally accepted that in our knowledge intensive society, lifelong learning becomes essential for career-long professional development (European Council 2009; ETUCE 2008).
- A focus on new forms of relationships and collaboration with colleagues, students and their parents (Hargreaves 1994: 424). Whitty (2008) not only emphasizes collaborative professionalism between colleagues in the school in professional learning communities, but also 'democratic professionalism' including collaboration with stakeholders outside the school.

- Emphasis on improvement and innovation. Teaching is seen as a dynamic and innovative profession, where teachers will need to reflect on their own practice and contribute to the improvement and innovation of the profession.
- A knowledge base that is the result of research, experience and reflection. This feature of professionalism leads to appeals to involve teachers in action research, self-study and practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009, Loughran et al 2004 , Ponte & Smeets 2009, Stenhouse 1975)

Those seven features characterize the role of professions in a competitive knowledge society with on the one hand collaborative lifelong learning and innovations and on the other hand a focus on accountability with respect to outcomes and control of the quality of professionals through standards.

The logic of professionalism

A fourth approach focuses on fundamental differences between logics in the labour market. Although this approach tries to identify professions and non-professions, it differs from the traits approach as the focus is not on studying manifestations of occupations in order to identify categories to classify occupations, but to search for the underlying and more fundamental logics that can explain the manifestation of professions and non-professions. Important work in this area has been done by Freidson (2001). He identifies three different logics, that of the bureaucracy, that of the free market and that of professionalism. Those different logics create different qualities that workers need to operate in each of these logics:

- In the logic of the free market, everyone is free to buy or sell goods and services. Nothing is regulated and customers make their decision rationally, based on financial concerns, emotional concerns and their previous experiences with products, services and providers. Free and unregulated competition will increase innovation and keep prices down. Customer preferences, satisfaction and choice, based on transparent information about quality and costs, determine which and whose service will succeed.
- In the logic of the bureaucracy, production and distribution of goods and services is planned, controlled and regulated by the administration of a large organisation, being governments, private firms or public agencies. The main aim of bureaucracy is to guarantee a reliable and transparent society with equal rights and equal access to all. Rules and regulations must safeguard that each individual is treated in the same way and does not have to depend on personal connections. Each organization 'is governed by an elaborate set of rules that establish the qualifications of those that can be employed to perform different jobs and that define their duties' (p1). Planning, supervision and standardisation assure customers the access to reliable services at reasonable costs. This is ensured by managers who control those producing the product.
- In the third logic of professionalism, workers with specialized knowledge have the power to organize their own work. They are privileged and exclusive, customers or managers can not employ anyone else. This privilege implies a system of self-control between professionals which prevents abuse of those exclusive rights, so 'customers and managers can count on work of high quality at reasonable costs' (p2).

In Freidson's perspective, professionalism is connected to a distinct mandate where *'... an organized occupation gains the power to determine who is qualified to perform a defined set of tasks, to prevent all others from performing that task and to control the criteria by which to evaluate performance. (...) The organized occupation creates the circumstances under which its members are free of control by those who employ them.'*(p12).

The necessity for this third logic is lying in the fact that certain work is so specialized that its quality is inaccessible for those lacking the required training and experience which makes it impossible for customers to select the best services on the free market. At the same time, the application of the expertise of professions is so much depending on specific contexts that continuous judgement, adaptation and *fingerspitzengefühl* of the professionals are needed, which makes standardization and bureaucratic control unsuited. According to Freidson, the work of professionals can not be standardized, rationalized and commodified (p17).

This is supported by Furlong (2000):

'It is because professionals face complex and unpredictable situations that they need a specialized body of knowledge; if they are to apply that knowledge, it is argued that they need the autonomy to make their own judgements; and given that they have that autonomy, it is essential that they act with responsibility – collectively they need to develop appropriate professional values'.(p18-19)

Neo-liberal ideologies have lead to a mixing of logics where education, but also public areas like health and social care, has become a commodity where parents and students can freely choose and base their choices on leak tables.

This has lead to a strong emphasis on professional quality of teachers by their employers and managers, leading to imposed professional development schemes from above. Evetts (2009) calls this 'organizational professionalism'.

'The effects are not the occupational control of the work by the worker/practitioners but rather control by the organizational managers and supervisors' (Evetts 2009: 23).

In the eyes of Evetts, the focus on the satisfaction of customers through managerial systems of accountability and audits endangers the trust of the public in professionals while it reduces the time that professionals can spend with clients. Opposite to organizational professionalism, Evetts places 'occupational professionalism', which is characterized by

'... a discourse constructed within professional groups, collegial authority, discretion and occupational control of the work, practitioner trust by both clients and employers, controls operationalized by practitioners and professional ethics monitored by institutions and associations.' (p23)

Both Evetts, Freidson and Furlong argue that professionals need to control their own work given the ideal-typical character of the knowledge and skills they use and their right of discretion. Teaching asks for professional judgement and the use of professional intuition (Atkinson and Claxton 2000), which can not be standardized.

However, this professional control and occupational professionalism asks for a close interconnection and link between professional autonomy, competence and trust.

The ethical and altruistic character of professions and the role of trust

To strengthen this link between professional autonomy, competence and trust, several authors emphasise the moral character of professionalism. In this fifth approach to professionalism, the fundamental ethical and altruistic character of professions is emphasized (Crook 2008, Lunt 2008). This ethical and altruistic character is connected to the power imbalance between professional and client. The role of professionals in their service to clients (like the service of teachers towards parents and pupils/students) asks for professional autonomy, which needs to be compensated by public trust based on the rigorous use of an ethical code.

Therefore the public 'strikes a bargain' with the professionals (Lunt 2008) in terms of a social contract negotiated by the state,

The essence of which is that professions are given greater autonomy than other social groups. They set their own standards, regulate entry into their own ranks, discipline their members, and operate with fewer restraints than the arts, trades or businesses. In return they are expected to serve the public good and enforce high standards of conduct and discipline. (Skrtic 1991: 87)

This social contract creates a professional mandate for a profession. This professional mandate is based on trust of the public and state in the professionals. This trust is grounded in the altruistic character of the professionals. For professionals, the measure of professional 'success' is not the gains they win, but the service they perform (Crook 2008). Not the height of their incomes makes the work of teachers worthwhile, but the quality of the learning of their students. This altruistic perspective explains the public criticism of high and excessive incomes and personal career ambitions of politicians, doctors, school managers, etc. The main emphasis for professionals should be on a high level of personal integrity and on service to others, ahead of personal reward. In that respect, the teaching profession could be considered as a 'calling'.

Several authors have elaborated the concept of trust, identifying different forms of trust, which vary in the way in which the risks are accepted or dealt with (Bottery 2003, Byrk & Schneider 2002, Nooteboom 2006).

The theories on trust show the importance of competence, integrity and dedication of the members of a profession to gain the trust of the public and the state and to justify the professional mandate. The members of a profession have a large responsibility to live up to those expectations with respect to competence, integrity and dedication. This is both a responsibility of individual members of the profession and of the professional community as a whole, e.g. through public accounts of professional practice and outcomes which are based on evidence and research, but also through the use of ethical codes and sanctions that are used within profession. The rigorous use of such ethical codes creates an essential safety net in the power imbalance between the public and professionals.

Trust in dedication of the professional is according to Nooteboom closely connected to empathy of professionals for their clients. In the relation between the professional and the client or the society, the development of a shared understanding of professional practice is important. The professional plays a key role in creating this shared understanding.

Implications for the qualities of teachers and their education

The discourse on the professionalism of teachers and the teaching profession has been dominated by complaints about teachers, as they should lack professionalism and elude governmental control, which needed to be compensated by stronger bureaucracy, government regulations and management control, and by complaints about governments as their measures should have de-professionalized the teaching profession and demoralized teachers.

At the same time, we need to be aware that this discourse is dominated by Anglo-Saxon writers and British-American perspectives. The debates and dilemmas with respect to teacher professionalism might be less heated in other cultural contexts.

Nevertheless, all over the world expectations towards teachers and their professionalism are high. Therefore it is important to reflect on the essential elements that constitute teachers' professionalism and the way in which teacher education can contribute to the development of this professionalism.

From our study of the literature on professionalism, a number of essential elements come up. Although the five perspectives on professionalism of teachers differ, they also add to each

other providing in the combination a richer and more complete picture of the essence of professionalism of teachers.

Characteristics of teacher professionalism that can be derived from the analysis of literature include:

1. Professional autonomy, through professional monopoly and control over their own work;
2. Involvement in the entrance to the profession;
3. Control over the central values and good conduct within the profession through the use of ethical codes, connected to sanctions for breaking the code;
4. Membership of professional societies that can take the responsibility for these elements;
5. A focus on integrity and dedication of the professional;
6. Public accountability for outcomes of professional performance;
7. A strong academic and practice-based knowledge base that underlies professional activities;
8. Involvement in the development of that knowledge base through involvement in academic research, action research and self-study;
9. Lifelong professional development of the members of the profession;
10. Collaboration with colleagues and stakeholders;
11. Involvement in the innovation of the profession;
12. Commitment of the teacher to support both the public and the state in their understanding of educational matters.

When these characteristics of the profession are translated to qualities of individual professionals, a frame of reference in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes can be created that can be used to analyse the contribution of teacher education curricula to the professionalism of teachers:

Elements that contribute to the professionalism of teachers

- Knowledge:
 - Thorough knowledge of the subject
 - Thorough knowledge of the teaching and learning process (including being up to date with relevant outcomes of educational research)
 - Thorough knowledge of society
 - Knowledge of policy and organisation in education
- Skills:
 - Able to communicate and discuss educational issues with a wider audience
 - Able to account the quality of work to the outside world
 - Able to conduct research within the practice of schools
 - Able to contribute to collaborative learning of professional communities
 - Able to translate outcomes of educational research to innovations in the classroom/school
- Attitudes
 - Dedicated to the learning of pupils
 - Committed to the profession and the collective group of professionals
 - Willing to contribute to the collective knowledge of the profession
 - Committed to the ethical code of the profession and the integrity of his/her work
 - Willing to account the quality of work to the outside world
 - Focused on continuous professional development
 - Focus on improvement and innovation of teaching

Given the ambitions to raise the quality of teachers and the expectations of society towards teachers that extend the primary role of the teachers with respect to teaching and learning, it is essential to develop curricula for initial teacher education that exceed the minimum standards and help student teachers to take up new roles as teacher leaders with an extended professionalism. The presented frame of reference can help to develop, to evaluate and to strengthen such curricula.

In two recent studies (Finnish Institute for Educational Research 2009, Snoek et al 2009) national standards and curricula for teacher education in the European member states have been analyzed. These studies show that there is a general consensus on the competences that teachers need. These competences are focused around subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, classroom management, linking theory to practice, co-operation and collaboration, continuous and lifelong learning and, less prominent, quality assurance, mobility and leadership. Most of the competences that are included in national teacher standards and in teacher education curricula focus on the micro- or classroom level, on the primary role of teaching and learning (European Commission 2010). Much less attention is given to the wider secondary roles of teachers. Although both studies are of a fairly general nature, they provide no evidence that elements like a thorough knowledge of society, knowledge of policy and organization, skills and attitudes to account for the quality of the teaching process to stakeholders in the outside world (apart from fulfilling Inspectorate schemes), participation in wider discussions on educational policies, commitment to the collective group of teachers or commitment to ethical codes are explicit elements of curricula for teacher education.

The curriculum of teacher education can stimulate these elements, e.g. by involving students in innovations within the faculty, by including activities that engage students in different ways for public accountability, by stimulating activities which involve other stakeholders outside the school, and by modelling these qualities by the teacher educators themselves.

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