

Being a Teacher

Professional Challenges and Choices

Section Three | Teaching as a profession

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SECTION THREE

Teaching as a profession

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At the end of Section Two, we posed a challenge, asking you how you could become 'part of the solution' in our current teaching context, and what you could do to empower learners to face their own challenges in the future.

When we last met Peter Adonis, he was beginning to realize that teachers would not be in a position to help learners 'become something in the world' if they saw themselves as victims, helpless in the face of difficulties. Does at least part of the answer lie in the notion of 'professionalism'?

But what is professionalism exactly? The word seems to mean very different things to different people. Let's listen in as a group of teachers at Artis Secondary, Peter Adonis' school, discuss the same newspaper article that Peter has read, about renewed calls for professionalism among teachers.

Teaching and professionalism

Shahieda was upset: 'There go the politicians again – flogging teachers for being unprofessional, and blaming them for whatever problems they can't sort out themselves. After all, it's only a minority of teachers who set a bad example and make things uncomfortable for the rest of us.'

'Isn't that what why we have a Code of Conduct and a Council of Educators?' asked Elmarie. 'When politicians attack teachers they makes us seem more like naughty children than professionals. It's like punishing a whole class of learners because a few have done something wrong.'

'Teachers do a good job of breaking down the profession themselves when they come to work in open-neck shirts or the latest fad in hair-styles,' said Livingstone, an older teacher. 'The breakdown in discipline we're seeing among pupils is what happens when you start relaxing standards among teachers.'

'Come on, Livingstone, you're living in the stone age if you think that professionalism amounts to a dress code,' said Shahieda.

'I agree,' said Peter. 'There must be something more to being a professional than keeping to a dress code. But just what do we mean by the word "professional"? I'm not even sure that teaching is a profession.'

'I've been thinking about how that word was used to keep us all in line in the eighties,' said Fana. 'Do you remember? It was "unprofessional" for teachers to discuss political topics in the classroom – unless we took it for granted that what the government did was right.'

'Yes, I know what you mean,' said Peter, 'People need to think about what they mean when they use the word "unprofessional". Behaviour that is unprofessional for some people, may be quite acceptable to others.'

These teachers bring to light some interesting issues regarding teaching as a profession. Like members of the police force and lawyers, teachers are often a target for public criticism. Should teachers jointly take responsibility for controlling their own conduct? And, in any case, what *is* professionalism? Does it mean more than a dress code and punctuality?

As we can see from the dialogue above, the meanings of words are not fixed, but 'built' over time by *the way people use them*. So it's not surprising that they come to be used in very different ways by different people. It's possible to use words to wield power over people if you say, 'It's "unprofessional" to do this or that.' You can shape

A concept is **contested** when various groups disagree about it and question it.

someone's way of thinking, in other words. No wonder there are sometimes vigorous debates about which meaning of 'professionalism' counts, or whether the word 'professional' even applies to teachers.

So which meanings of these terms 'matter'? What *forms* of professionalism will help teachers in their efforts to serve learners? And does this contested concept hold a key to the renewal of teaching in this country?

Learning outcomes for this section

When you have worked through this section, you should be able to:

- recognize and distinguish between the various meanings commonly attached to the terms 'profession', 'professional' and 'professionalism';
- point out the problems with taken-for-granted, 'common-sense' views on professionalism in teaching;
- critically discuss the various arguments and practices associated with the idea of teaching as a profession, and be able to distinguish which of these are more beneficial and urgent for both educators and learners;
- recognize what factors in today's world threaten to prevent teachers from acting professionally; and
- critically discuss three key documents on which professional accountability in South Africa is based: the South African Council for Educators (SACE) Code of Conduct, the Education Labour Relations Council's (ELRC's) Manual for Teacher Appraisal and the same body's Resolution on the Duties and Responsibilities of Teachers.

Making sense of professionalism

3.2

ACTIVITY 8: YOUR VIEW

You will gain more from your study of this section if you begin by putting down on paper your own thoughts on what the term 'professionalism' means. Make a simple list in your workbook starting with the words, 'Professional teachers ...'

Let's find out how the term 'profession' is generally understood and how a 'profession' differs from other kinds of occupation.

Eric Hoyle and Peter John are two writer-researchers who have thought hard about the concepts of a profession and professionalism. In their 1995 analysis, 'Professional Knowledge and Professional Practice', they summarize the thinking of a number of writers on the subject of teaching as a profession. Drawing on their description, we will say that a profession is associated with the following qualities:

1. *A crucial social function*

A profession is an occupation that performs a crucial social function or service requiring a considerable degree of skill and competence.

2. *Specialized knowledge*

Professionals draw on a well-established, well-tested body of specialized knowledge, for instance medicine or the law. Acquiring this body of knowledge and skill requires a lengthy period of higher education.

3. *Professional competence*

This competence is exercised in situations that are not wholly routine, but which present new problems and require more than *recipe-type knowledge* or simple, 'right or wrong' judgements. For example, doctors may well face situations in which the best course of action is not clear, or in which two *right* courses of action are in direct conflict with each other. In contrast, electricians often make relatively straightforward decisions, even though they draw on a variety of solutions that involve technical knowledge.

4. *Professional responsibility*

The long period of education required by professions entails socialization into professional *values*, which focus on serving the client's interests rather than deriving economic profit. In other words, society expects professionals to make decisions that involve considerable risk, and to take a high level of *responsibility* for these decisions in the interests of their clients, for example a doctor diagnosing and treating a patient's illness correctly. These professional values are set down in an ethical code of conduct, to which all registered and licensed members of the profession are bound to adhere.

5. *Professional autonomy*

Professionals require considerable freedom or autonomy to make judgements, because they have to draw on knowledge-based skills and values-based decision-making in non-routine situations that are often complex and risky. This involves relative freedom from very restrictive bureaucratic control by the government or from public interference.

This freedom extends to the professional organizations that have control over the



Spend 5 to 10 minutes on this activity. Its purpose is not to test the 'correctness' of your understanding of professionalism. However, as you work through this section, you will find it useful to look back every now and then and compare what you read or think with what you have written here – and to note whether your thinking has changed or not. We will remind you to do this at appropriate points.

Recipe-type knowledge refers to simple, 'how-to' knowledge, rather than a deeper, theoretically informed understanding.

A process of **socialization** would include learning the attitudes, values and actions appropriate to members of a particular culture or group.

Bureaucratic control would involve having to apply a large number of rules and procedures in every imaginable situation.

professional responsibilities and conduct of their members. These organizations enjoy the autonomy to register their own members, and to discipline them if they infringe the code of conduct.

6. Professional accountability

In exchange for professional autonomy, the controlling body of the profession assures society that its members are competent, responsible, and accountable. It also ensures professional control over their *credentials* and their entry into the profession; and it ensures a high degree of accountability through published codes of conduct, disciplinary committees, and *audits*.

However, this autonomy is not a 'reward' bestowed on a profession by a grateful public, but a hard-won right acquired over a long period of time, which is always open to challenge from members of society. For example, if people became suspicious that doctors were too readily prescribing expensive medicines, which they also sold from their own surgeries, these people might react by challenging doctors' rights to sell medicines.

Your **credentials** are the qualifications that prove that you can do a particular type of work.

An **audit** is a careful, detailed and official check on quality.

Is teaching a profession?

3.3

ACTIVITY 9: ASSESSING TEACHERS' CLAIMS TO PROFESSIONAL STATUS



You will need around 20 minutes for this activity.



Use the summary of professional characteristics you have just read and the table we provide on the next page to compare the two occupations shown here. If you feel that the description 'fits', just put a tick in the appropriate column. If you feel it doesn't fit, or doesn't *quite* fit, briefly write your reason for saying so. (If you are in doubt, think of the South African situation, rather than of doctors and teachers in general.)

| Characteristic | Doctor | Teacher |
|--|--------|---------|
| 1. Performs a crucial social function | | |
| 2. Able to draw on a well-established, well-tested body of specialized knowledge | | |
| 3. Expected by society to use considerable skill in non-routine, complex situations | | |
| 4. Required to undergo a lengthy period of higher education | | |
| 5. Required to have strong professional values, which focus on client interests | | |
| 6. Expected to take a high level of responsibility for professional actions | | |
| 7. Professional obligations set down in an ethical code of conduct | | |
| 8. Has considerable professional autonomy | | |
| 9. Professional body ensures competence and accountability by controlling admission to the profession and monitoring conduct | | |

Weighing up teaching as a profession

When we did this activity ourselves, we found that doctors fitted the description pretty well. When it came to teachers, we entered a number of ticks, but were hesitant in ticking some characteristics. Here are our reasons:

1. Performs a crucial social function?

Yes, most people agree this is true, but their actions fail to support their opinion. Some people think that if someone is available to control children's behaviour and see to their safety, computers and well-crafted learning materials could provide an adequate means of learning.

Another important reservation we have is that *some* South African teachers do not seem to regard their function as crucial. They give out this message through their absenteeism, lateness, and lack of preparation.

2. Specialized knowledge?

Society is unlikely to place a convinced tick in this block. Although a great deal has been written about teaching, there is considerable disagreement as to how reliable it is, compared with other professions. There is also considerable disagreement within educational circles about the various theories of learning and teaching (we deal with this in more depth in Section Five).

3. *Skilled in non-routine, complex situations?*

We unhesitatingly ticked this block when we thought of what is required of teachers every day in the classroom. But we doubted that the majority of the public expected this of teachers, especially if they had themselves experienced poor teaching. And then there are educational administrators and researchers who seem to think (incorrectly) that teaching can be reduced to a limited number of 'formulae', making it essentially a technical activity (we discuss this in Sections 3. 5).

4. *A lengthy period of higher education?*

Interestingly enough, a tick here becomes more and more appropriate, as time goes by. A few years ago, the majority of South African teachers would not have qualified, but now, more and more teachers have higher education diplomas and degrees. In fact, it is increasingly difficult to gain a promotion post without a post-graduate degree.

5. *A focus on client interests?*

We had no problem ticking this one, if we looked at the majority of teachers. Though there would be many differences of opinion as to who teachers' clients are (learners or parents) and what their best interests might be.

6. *A high level of responsibility?*

Yes, but the responsibility for the safety and good education of learners is *shared* among many teachers (over a number of years, and, in secondary education, among several teachers in the same year). So the public is only likely to regard teachers as highly responsible in the case of a crisis, such as when a child fails, or when there is a dispute about discipline. It is more likely to be impressed by the weight of individual responsibility.

7. *An ethical code of conduct?*

Yes. However, this is a recent development for all teachers in South Africa. The South African Council of Educators' Code of Conduct became legally binding only in 1998. Before that, only the Teachers' Federal Council (for white teachers) was allowed to develop its own code of conduct during the 1980s. Again, this is evidence that teachers are moving increasingly in the direction of a full profession.

8. *Considerable professional autonomy?*

Not quite half a tick here. The South African Council of Educators (SACE) has created a certain amount of autonomy for the collective body of teachers. Yet its powers are mainly *regulatory* (registering and disciplining) and *developmental*.

Control still rests to a great extent with the provincial departments of education as employers and bodies responsible for schooling. Increasing control has passed to the school governing bodies since the Schools Act of 1996, as schools employ more teachers in additional 'governing body' posts. However, even when teachers are relatively tightly controlled, they enjoy a degree of practical autonomy *in their own classrooms*.

9. *Controlled by a professional body?*

Here we put half a tick. The SACE does control registration and licensing. This is an example of *professional accountability* (see Section 3.6). However, the teachers themselves share responsibility for control of their conduct with the provincial education authorities. The teacher unions negotiate responsibilities and conditions of service (including salaries) with the state as employer at the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC).

In South Africa, teachers are held to account through the regulations and require-



Note the tendency for lawyers, architects and other professionals to *share* responsibility by working in *teams*. General practitioners also tend to refer patients to specialist doctors when they feel that the responsibility for diagnosing a particular illness or prescribing a particular treatment exceeds their level of training or experience.



At this point, look back to what you wrote in Activity 8, and compare it with what you have learnt since doing so.

ments of the provincial education departments and through an ELRC appraisal system.

Back to Artis Secondary

Some of the staff at Artis attended a one-day seminar on professionalism presented by their teachers' union. They performed an activity very similar to the one referred to above. This is part of the discussion that developed in the staffroom the following day:

'Well, I think we should forget about the whole idea of calling teaching a profession,' said Peter. 'So much depends on how society sees an occupation – it all boils down to public perceptions. Our efforts to establish ourselves as a profession will come to little if society in general doesn't recognize us as one.'

'I wouldn't say it all depends on what the public thinks,' objected Shahieda. 'I think you're being pessimistic.'

'Well,' said Peter, 'a lot of people think that teaching's something anyone could do if they wanted to – that there's nothing special about teachers' knowledge.'

'Yes,' said Elmarie. 'The public aren't really aware of the responsibility that good teachers carry for their learners, how they try to awaken an interest in reading or science when it seems so remote from their learners' lives, how they worry when a bright student starts doing badly.'

'Maybe you're right,' said Shahieda. 'People usually talk about responsibility only when a teacher does something wrong. But I still think we're missing something here. Maybe the idea of recognition is just not that important, and it's something else we should be aiming at as a profession.'

'I think so too,' said Peter. 'When I look at the description of a profession, what I see is something to strive towards, not an accomplished fact – and we're only part of the way there. Striving to achieve professional status is a distraction from the real struggle.'

Fana had been listening without saying anything until now. 'I agree,' he said. 'The real struggle is to transform our schools and our teaching. For a long time many teachers have seen professionalism as a key to improving their status. To them it meant dressing conservatively, being particular about what political party you belonged to and choosy about who you associated with.'

'Remember when the word "professional" had a bad name?' asked Shahieda. 'When the first teachers' unions were formed in the late 80s, members thought of themselves as "workers", whereas the more conservative teachers' organizations called themselves "professional associations". Teachers were polarized: those who belonged to the professional associations tended to think that they had a monopoly on professionalism. Those who belonged to unions saw themselves as workers and tended to reject the idea of teaching as a profession.'

'That's right,' said Peter. 'But what really polarized teachers was the question of whether teachers should go on strike.'

People can become **polarized** over an issue when they assume opposed positions over an argument; if they disagree in other words.

Strike!

Strikes are by nature dramatic events, and the period preceding a strike is always characterized by considerable tension – between workers and employers, between different employee organizations, and even between employees within the same organization. People fear loss of salary, employment, the hostility of colleagues, even open conflict. Co-workers who generally agree begin to divide. These are some of the reasons why virtually no-one enjoys going on strike, or only chooses to strike as a last resort.

But newspapers and other news media like strikes because they make a good story. Unfortunately, all the drama tends to make us forget the policy discussion, research and hard bargaining that make up employee/ employer relations. Nevertheless, strikes are certain to divide teachers decisively on the issue of professionalism; they pose a very considerable professional dilemma for many.

ACTIVITY 10: TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM AND TEACHER UNIONISM

- 1 Read the two brief passages that make up Reading 5 in your Reader: 'Teachers want what students need' by Randall van den Heever on page 39, and 'Tricky tension for teachers' by Archie Vergotine on page 41. These passages were written by the leaders of teacher organizations on either side of a 1994 debate on strikes. Read them with care and compare the use of the word 'professional' in each extract.
- 2 Can you justify depriving learners of their teachers for a day or more in order to campaign for better conditions for teachers?
- 3 One side of the 'strike debate' believed that learners might be more harmed by their teachers having to work in poor conditions, and under poor conditions of service, than they would if teachers were out on strike for a few days. Can you think of circumstances that might support this argument?



Take about 10 minutes to answer the questions.

On the one hand, Vergotine stresses the professional characteristics of teaching, subordinating teacher concerns for the good of the learners. He writes of the tension that results from being both a worker and a professional. On the other hand, Van den Heever seems to justify teachers' use of the strike as a possible strategy. He sees no tension between professional work and union activity. Notice how he uses the word 'professional' as an adjective to describe a type of work, rather than laying a very strong emphasis on the idea that teachers are professionals.

Can you justify depriving learners of teaching in order to campaign for teacher rights? You might have said, 'Under no circumstances' to this question (see point 4 in Section 3.2 and the discussion of *responsibility* in Section 3.6, 'Beyond accountability'), that it would be a breach of professional responsibility, set a poor moral example to learners, and squander the remaining respect that people have for teachers.

Or you might have said that learners' rights need to be balanced against teachers' rights to take home an income that enables teachers to support families of their own. You might have pointed out that in many countries such as Australia and Canada, teacher unionization and strikes are *not* regarded with dismay, and have at times secured important reforms in the schooling system. You might have picked up that time lost through strike action should be compensated for – presumably by running catch-up classes.

Could poor teaching and service conditions harm learners more than a strike? It has long been argued that if teachers' salaries or conditions of service are allowed to fall too far behind those of other occupations, the calibre of people drawn into

teaching will drop – to the long-term disadvantage of learners.

In 1998 the retrenching of temporary teachers brought the National Professional Teacher Organizations of South Africa (NAPTOSA), which had always opposed strike action as being unprofessional, to the point of striking. This policy was seen to threaten an increasing burden on the remaining teachers and consequently to threaten the quality of teaching. It was argued by all unions that even though this policy aimed to achieve redistribution of resources to disadvantaged schools, the **way** the policy was being implemented meant that many of those disadvantaged schools were having to shoulder the burden of staff reduction.

Such shifts in the reasons for striking, coupled with a legislation that identified former professional organizations as 'unions' if they engaged in collective bargaining, tended to narrow the gap between various teacher organizations in the later nineties. Yet the fundamental issues expressed by the two writers in Reading 5 (on pages 39 and 41 in your Reader) remain. The questions of moral responsibility towards the 'client', of conflicting principles of right action, mean that the decision to strike is a professional issue for teachers.

Striving for professionalism

We suggest that neither taking for granted your status as a professional, nor abandoning your identity of a professional is a healthy way to see yourself as a teacher. Instead we recommend a different approach, one that Peter was beginning to develop in the last dialogue, namely that of striving towards, not professional status, but professionalism.

This shifts our understanding of professionalism from a state or condition, to something we can aim for, an ongoing goal that allows us to keep abreast of educational trends and developments, in other words to remain 'life-long learners' ourselves.

¹ See Clause 6.2 of the SACE Code of Conduct, Reading 9 (page 52), and 1.80 of the Manual for Teacher Appraisal, Reading 9c (page 58), in your Reader.



To strive for professionalism is not to see it as a state or condition, but as a goal.

But what *forms* of professionalism are most likely to help teachers in their efforts to serve learners? In order to introduce some clarity into this picture of striving for professionalism, we need to distinguish between two forms that 'professionalism' may take: professionalization and professional development.

Professionalization and professional development

The concepts of professionalization and professional development both express goals or values to strive after, but the actual goals of these two forms of professionalism are rather different.

The goal of *professionalization* is to achieve public and legal recognition of an occupation's full professional status. This usually involves:

- working to establish a self-governing body, like the Bar Association for lawyers, or



In the world of teaching, the term 'professional development' usually refers to in-service *programmes* of capacity-building aimed at improving teachers' competence and practice. We prefer this term to Hoyle and John's 'professionalism', because we can extend the former term to include a striving towards improved competence and practice. The word 'professionalism' is an invented term that is not yet generally recognized.

Look back to the list of professional qualities at the beginning of Section 3.2, where we describe professional competence and professional responsibility.



A non-teaching example of 'professionalization' occurred in the late nineties in the form of the 'Talk to my lawyer' advertising campaign, which sought to get more people to employ the services of lawyers. A teaching example occurred in recent years in the pre-school sector, which expanded with the increased demand for qualified pre-school teachers from clients (in this case parents).



You will need about 30 minutes for this activity.

Self-aggrandizement is the desire to increase one's status or power.

the South African Council of Educators; and

- strengthening credential boundaries so that it is not too easy to enter the profession.

Given the need to assure the public of special knowledge and good service, there are good reasons for these goals. Over time **professionalization** leads professionals to develop a market for their services, to define who is competent to provide these services, to restrict their numbers by imposing ever-higher entrance qualification requirements, and to achieve the exclusive legal right to supply these services (Hoyle & John, 1995: 7). By these means they assure themselves of job security, social prestige and the ability to demand higher salary levels.

The goal of **professional development** on the other hand, aims to improve the quality of service provided – teachers' skills, values and practice, in the interests of clients. This form of professionalism needs little explanation, but the urgency of South Africa's need for it becomes clear if we think back to the 'moral minimization' that Fataar and Patterson found in their study of teachers' coping strategies.

One can see from this comparison that professionalization tends to focus more on the attainment of status and rights (extrinsic motivation), while professional development focuses on taking teaching responsibilities seriously (intrinsic motivation).

ACTIVITY 11: PROFESSIONALIZATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1 Read the article 'A culture of teaching' by Wally Morrow, Reading 6 on page 43 in your Reader.
- 2 Morrow emphasizes the need for teachers to discover or rediscover their special responsibilities as teachers. Is he calling for profession-alization or professional development? Explain your answer briefly.
- 3 Morrow also says that the reconstruction of education in South Africa is not merely a matter of individual teachers 'trying harder'. What reason does he give for this?
- 4 Like Fataar and Patterson, Morrow is writing mainly with dysfunctional schools in mind. This is where the need for professional development is probably most urgent. Do you think it is also a necessity in more 'functional' schools, or are they places where teachers can afford to get on with achieving professionalization goals?

The whole of Morrow's article points to the need for teachers to see themselves as crucial agents in bringing about a 'culture of teaching and learning'. The concern here is not about teachers' status or autonomy, but about their 'special responsibilities' to serve their 'clients' and society.

Professionalization **may** contribute to practitioners' professional competence and ability to serve society by establishing professional bodies like the SACE, but **may not** necessarily result in the development of professional competence. Indeed, some features of the professionalization agenda are more likely to deflect practitioners' attention from self-improvement towards self-aggrandizement (Hoyle & John, 1995: 16). This is partly why the SACE has strongly identified with the professional development function, as have the various teacher unions.

The Artis teachers pointed out that there are several reasons why the public is unlikely to be convinced in favour of a professional status for teachers, even though some of their reasons may be unsound – some people can't imagine how a teacher taking seven-year-olds through a number game can be called a professional. The point is that professional status must be **earned**, not simply claimed, and will only be forthcoming if teachers as a group demonstrate client-orientated responsibility, and base their authority to teach on specialized knowledge and a high degree of competence.

For the individual teacher, long-term job satisfaction is more likely to result from the daily accomplishment of this knowledge and competence, than from the increased status gained through professionalization. Long-term satisfaction is based

on competence in serving others, and the self-esteem that it gives rise to. This is not quite the same as the pleasure associated with professional status, which results from political effort in favour of oneself and one's colleagues.

According to Morrow, what the situation demands is a **collective** effort, which requires **all teachers** to contribute and participate in professional development, for example by sharing resources with less fortunate schools.

Agreeing with Morrow, we advocate that teachers pursue, individually and collectively, a goal of professionalism-as-professional-development, aimed at serving the best interests of learners with ever-increasing competence. They should not let themselves be distracted by too much attention to issues of status and autonomy, so that it can truly be said of **all** teachers that 'teachers want what learners need'. As one union organizer and campaigner for school/community renewal from Soshanguve commented, 'You're a teacher before you're a member of a teacher organization.'

Having argued strongly in favour of the pursuit of professional development, we must hasten to prevent some possible misunderstandings:

- First, we are not saying that professionalization is an unworthy aim in itself, simply that it has the **potential** to be, and often is, self-serving. It would be more helpful to think of professionalism as a continuum rather than two completely separate forms. At one extreme is the status-seeking professionalization process described above, at the other extreme are simplistic 'recipe' efforts to improve teaching, which have little connection with the idea of teachers as professionals.

Establishing a teachers' council, a code of conduct, and certain minimum credentials for qualification as a teacher would be somewhere **between the extremes**, nearer to the 'professionalization' end. What we have called 'professional development' would be closer to the 'improvement' end.

In fact, teachers and teacher organizations don't need to make an either/or choice here. We are arguing that teachers, collectively and individually, need to prioritize, putting the professional development 'agenda' (and therefore learners) ahead of the professionalization one. It is **through** professional development that teachers' status as professionals will come to be more widely recognized.

- Second, we are **not** advocating that teachers should not engage in union activities, both those relating to professional development and those relating to 'bread-and-butter' issues. History has all-too-frequently demonstrated the need for teachers to be collectively vigilant with respect to salary levels.
- Third, we still think that teachers need to strive against the many current trends toward de-professionalization in the world of teaching. When we examine the current situation on the issue of professional teaching, we find that the context is quite contradictory. For example, some 'professional development' programmes actually tend to **de-professionalize** teaching.

When something is in a **continuum** it changes gradually, keeping a common character from one extreme to the other.

3.5

The contradictory context of professionalism

Favourable policies

On the one hand, current official policies are generally favourable to professional development, on the other hand, the legacy of apartheid as well as current trends towards de-skilling often work against professional development.

Research conducted in KwaZulu-Natal in 1998 by the President's Education Initiative (PEI) Research Programme, the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg (UNP) and financed by the Joint Education Trust (JET), set out to examine the 'fit' between the latest policy and practice of teaching. It analysed four key documents,¹ which, taken together, set out the responsibilities and expected norms of professional conduct, as well as the frameworks for developing and appraising teacher competence.

The analysis found a general coherence and consistency among the documents, despite the fact that they had been drafted by different agencies. It found that they 'work together to promote teaching as a profession, and attempt to create a balance between professional accountability and professional autonomy' (1998: 37). In combination, the policies require:

- planned professional growth on the part of teachers;
- accountability through democratic appraisal; and
- a demonstration of competence in teaching practice.

¹ The four documents studied were the *Norms and Standards for Teacher Education* (1998: Committee on Teacher Education Policy, or COTEP); the *SACE Code of Conduct* (1997: South African Council for Educators, or SACE); the *Manual for Teacher Appraisal* (1997: Education Labour Relations Council, or ELRC); and *Duties and Responsibilities of Educators* (1998: National Department of Education).

See Reading 3, 'Teachers, identities and space' by Heather Jacklin.

The unfavourable legacy of apartheid education

Unfortunately, the legacy of apartheid works against professional development. It was only in the mid-nineties that teaching in South Africa began to emerge from a racially fragmented education system characterized by top-down administration, which took very little account of real teacher professionalism except to **control** teachers ideologically. Any teaching that encouraged learners to question the situation they were in, or the government's part in creating that situation, and any participation in any form of resistance to the machinery of apartheid government, was branded 'unprofessional' by the state and by many teachers. As a teacher on the Cape Flats explains (Reeves, 1994):

I could never understand why I had to submit my exam question paper on prescribed books in English to an inspector who would often acknowledge that he hadn't even read the books. How could I claim to be a professional when I handed over responsibility for my work to some outside person?

The school curriculum, the examination system and an authoritarian inspection system were all designed to leave little room for teacher initiative, interpretation and creativity – or for teachers to use fine judgement in complex, non-routine situations. All of these, of course, would have been marks of the professional. Rigid bureaucratic regulation was applied in a routine way, with everyone from the principal down to the learners being forced to comply without questioning.

This unquestioning approach was also instilled by the dominant form of professional education in most black and Afrikaans-language universities, *fundamental*

See the account of bureaucratic accountability by Linda Darling Hammond in Reading 8 on page 47 of your Reader.

pedagogics, which was presented and taught as the 'science' of education, and therefore as beyond criticism (Taylor and Vinjevoold: 132–133). This oppressive stance hardly encouraged individual teachers to acquire a professional knowledge base. And attitudes bred over decades do not die out overnight.

De-professionalization

In addition to this unfavourable legacy, current international trends tend towards *de-skilling* and *de-professionalization*. Since the late seventies, teachers in the US and Britain have resisted these trends with limited success. Unfortunately South Africa has also been influenced, even while many teachers remain set in unprofessional ways of thinking. To meet this challenge, we therefore need to better understand some of these counter-professional trends.

When any trend takes root in society, there has to be a context to provide fertile ground for it. In countries like the US and Britain, teachers have seen their professional autonomy eroded over the last two decades. This has happened in the context of a conservative backlash against the progressive educational trends of the sixties and seventies, accompanied by the election to office of conservative political leaders in those countries. Added to this were the threats of competing economies such as the Japanese economy. The schooling system was blamed for relatively poor economic performance, and it was expected to produce a more competitive workforce.

The usual tendency of conservative governments is to decrease spending on social services such as welfare and education. This indeed happened in both of these countries in the late seventies and eighties, while at the same time teachers were held to account for the *results* they had produced in the light of government spending (of taxpayers' money) on education.

In Britain, teachers' relative freedom to make their own decisions in the classroom, which they had slowly won and enjoyed in the sixties and early to mid-seventies, was increasingly restricted by the introduction of the National Curriculum and the increasing perception of teachers as technicians. Centralized administration and bureaucratic control regulated what and how teachers could teach. In the US, where the control of schooling is much more decentralized, and the curriculum far less standardized than in Britain, bigger schools (especially secondary schools) have tended to become impersonal bureaucracies.

De-professionalization in South Africa

Educational trends in the US and Britain often tend to influence South Africa. So we need to ask: is the context right for these de-professionalizing trends here?

At first appearance the answer is no. In policy terms, the transition to democracy in the nineties has created a context that seems favourable for improvements in professional development. In fact, draft transformation policies in education were well-advanced before the new government took power in 1994 and teachers are acknowledged as key roleplayers in the transformation of education.

Another reason for optimism about teachers' professional development is that South Africa spends a significantly higher proportion of its government's operating budget on education (22.1% in 1999/2000) than countries like Portugal, Chile and Egypt. This proportion compares favourably with those of developed nations like the US and Britain. And in South Africa, the various provinces spend between 85% and 95% of the education budget on educators' salaries (Taylor and Vinjevoold, 1999: 27). So these contextual factors certainly favour professional development.

However, the educational context has many contradictions and many reasons for teachers to be vigilant as the scope for de-professionalization trends increases. This scope is increasing locally because:

Fundamental Pedagogics claimed to be scientific and objective in nature, homing in on the 'essences' of the 'phenomenon of education'. However, as an orthodoxy it discouraged dissent, and in fact incorporated many assumptions based on the State's ideology of Christian National Education.

- educational bodies have to redress costly system imbalances inherited from apartheid;
- educational bureaucracies tend to adopt a technical approach to teaching and in-service teacher training;
- global economies require that schools create a competitively productive workforce, which also puts pressure on schools to become more like technical training institutions; and
- overseas companies promote education materials that require little of teachers.

The effects of de-professionalization

How might such forces affect teachers who are striving to develop themselves as professionals both individually and collectively? Here are some of the effects that have been observed in schools overseas and at home.

- The underestimation of teachers' knowledge and capabilities, leading to 'professional development' programmes that are 'done to' teachers, rather than carried out with them, or by them.
- Narrow in-service training of teachers based on 'recipes' for effective teaching. This usually takes the form of isolated, one-to-five-day courses focused on particular problems or techniques. The techniques tend to remain external 'tools'; they do not combine into a coherent, long-term course of professional development that builds internal vocational commitment or professional qualities.
- Knowledge-making (the work of researchers and writers) comes to be viewed as quite separate from and superior to knowledge transmission (supposedly the work of teachers, who are often considered to simply 'transmit' a simplified version of the knowledge to learners).
- The idea becomes widespread that anyone who can control a class of young learners can transmit knowledge in the appropriate form. The pre-service education of teachers is therefore reduced to education in 'subject knowledge' (mathematics, languages, science or whatever) plus an introduction to practical methodology, the basics of which can supposedly be taught quite quickly. The rest is supposed to be learnt 'on the job' in schools, where theory is often downplayed or ignored, and the emphasis falls on mastering a number of practical skills and techniques.
- Hasty in-service training results in misconceptions about the teacher's role. For instance, many South African teachers have come to believe that facilitation and learner-centred teaching do not require much preparation or actual teaching.
- The increasing flow of 'teacher-proof materials' such as teaching kits, reading laboratories, sophisticated learning texts, videotapes and computer-aided instruction. Some of these have considerable value as teaching aids, but many are designed to minimize or eliminate the role of the teacher. To be profitable, they also have to address the **broadest** audience possible and this standardization (especially if imported from overseas) fails to recognize local conditions.
- Added to this, all but the best of these 'teacher-proof' materials reinforce the idea that there is one correct answer to every question. They don't ask open-ended questions requiring interpretation because these would require a professionally skilled teacher.
- Finally, these materials reinforce the common misunderstanding that knowledge is something 'out there' that learners have to 'take in'. This view fails to see that knowledge is something that learners have to **construct** for themselves from new learnings, in conjunction with what they have learnt and experienced already – often with the guidance of an educator (see Section 5.7).
- Under the pressure of economic necessity, high learner-classroom ratios result in large classes that teachers are not equipped to handle. This can lead to teachers developing 'survival strategies' (like the 'chalk-and-talk' approach) that fail to



'Teacher-proof' materials are designed to minimize the role of the teacher.

deliver quality teaching.

- When education is driven by economic needs such as global competitiveness, outcomes-based education tends to be understood in a narrowly technical way. A narrow 'educational objectives' approach more suited to technical training replaces a more integrated, formative approach that seeks to foster *all* aspects of the learner's development. Competence is perceived in terms of demonstrable *skills* that can be assessed in a straightforward, measurable way, but the values and purposes that connect and inform these skills are considered 'luxuries'.

ACTIVITY 12: PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT IN TEACHING

- 1 Read the brief excerpt from *What's Worth Fighting For in School? Working Together for Improvement* by Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves (Reading 7, page 45 in your Reader). These British writers have vigorously opposed the trends towards de-professionalizing teaching in Britain.
- 2 Think of an example from your own experience in which you or another teacher had to 'make a discretionary judgement in a situation of unavoidable uncertainty' in the interests of a learner or learners. Describe it briefly in your workbook.
- 3 What made the decision difficult? Do you agree with Fullan and Hargreaves that '[in] teaching, as in a number of other occupations, the core of its professionalism is best defined and described not in terms of pay or status or qualifications, but in terms of the distinctive kinds of action and judgements that professionals typically make'?



You will need about 20 minutes for this activity.

Compare teaching with an occupation like plumbing. If a plumber's client complains of water pipes making banging sounds in the wall, the plumber knows two or three possible solutions to such a problem. He will try one method (say, checking the hot water cylinder pressure valve), and if that doesn't solve the problem, he will try the next treatment and so on, until the problem is solved. The attempted solutions are technical and recipe-like, and are either right or wrong. Qualified plumbers are extremely well paid in South Africa, but they are not considered professionals.

Teachers in South Africa are not widely considered to be 'full professionals' in the sense that doctors, lawyers or managers are. Teaching is unlike plumbing in that one

'right' approach may conflict with another 'right' approach. Yet those who are at all conscientious, practice professionalism in their decisions and actions every day, balancing one learner need against another. What truly matters in professionalism is that these decisions and actions reflect competence and quality in knowledge, skills and values, and that they are made in the best interests of those learners.

Licensed to teach?

At Artis Secondary, Elmarie was indignant. The Principal had put quite a lot of pressure on her to help him out with a staffing problem. As she explained to her friends in the staffroom at break: 'You know Rosemarie's leaving at the end of the term. Her husband got a post in Ladysmith, and she's decided to move there with him. Now the Boss wants me to teach her two Grade 11 economics classes for the rest of the year. I told him I've never even studied economics, but he said it shouldn't be difficult to swot up enough to get the kids through their exams!'

'You probably won't find it so bad,' said Livingstone. 'Quite a few of us play Jack-of-all-trades. If you're a teacher, you can teach anything if you just swot it up and keep a step or two ahead of the pupils – like you probably did in your first year of teaching!'

'But isn't this being unprofessional when you think about it?' asked Fana. 'I mean, isn't the saying "Jack-of-all-trades, master of none"?' Elmarie's qualified to teach English and geography. When teachers have to teach in areas they aren't qualified in at all, what are we saying to the community about the value of schooling?'

'That's what worries me,' said Elmarie. 'I'm not qualified to teach economics. Look, I know a thing or two about teaching, so I can probably keep the classes busy and maybe even learning something. But how am I going to be able to answer tricky questions? And at the end of the year, I'll have to give an account of myself if a lot of them fail.'

Elmarie has a problem, and there's certainly more than one way of looking at it. We will come back to the problem of teaching on the basis of insufficient content knowledge in Section 5.3, but right now let's try to get a better understanding of 'giving an account of oneself', and how it is connected to professionalism.

Professional accountability

3.6

The intention of developing professional competence is one thing, but how does an occupation provide a reasonable warranty of competence and quality service so that the public can have the assurance that learners are being given the best possible attention?

In a democratic society, teachers need to provide such a warranty, otherwise the professional privileges of control over their own responsibilities and standards will not be recognized, or will be withdrawn. There must be a mechanism for finding out whether teachers are 'delivering', and not breaching the constitutional rights of the learners. This is where the principle of accountability comes in.

Linda Darling Hammond's article 'Accountability for professional practice' (Reading 8, page 47 of your Reader) points out the importance of educational accountability in a modern society. She sets out to dispel some of the confusion surrounding this issue by categorizing a number of different *forms* of accountability. Three of these are as relevant to teachers in South Africa as they are to teachers in the US:

- **legal accountability**, which implies that some fairly serious harm has *already* been done (this process is not only expensive; it is reactive rather than proactive);
- **bureaucratic accountability**, which was the predominant means of educational management and accountability under the apartheid government, and which is still with us; and
- **professional accountability**, which as we will discover, offers proactive rather than reactive reassurance.

ACTIVITY 13: BUREAUCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Read pages 47–50 of the article 'Accountability for professional practice' by Linda Darling Hammond (Reading 8 in the Reader), then note down your thoughts on the following questions:

- 1** What are the advantages of bureaucratic accountability, if any?
- 2** What are its disadvantages for teachers?
- 3** What are its disadvantages for learners?

Darling Hammond mentions the good intentions behind bureaucratic accountability. It has the advantage (at least in theory) of ensuring that:

- clients such as learners are treated equally and consistently, so that decisions affecting them are not made subjectively by officials and teachers;
- rules and standard procedures are in place to control the actions of officials, and there are unpleasant consequences for those who do not follow them; and
- time and money are saved by laying down standardizing procedures and services (this point is not mentioned by the writer).

According to Darling Hammond, the disadvantages of bureaucratic accountability for teachers (and implicitly for learners) heavily outweigh the above advantages because:

- teachers become functionaries following the prescriptions and regulations handed down by authorities without scope for their professional development ('Just follow the syllabus!');
- teacher accountability takes the form of inspection based on rule-following and exam results, and as a result it cannot guarantee educational outcomes or professional competence because it can only hold teachers accountable for following standard procedures; and



If a teacher is guilty of misconduct that involves breaking society's laws, he or she could face criminal charges in court, in addition to disciplinary action within the profession. This is, of course, the case for members of any profession.



You will need about 40 minutes for this activity.

- it makes the false assumption that standardized procedures are appropriate for all students in all educational circumstances.

As the following two teachers explain (Reeves, 1994: 39, 41):

You became completely mechanical and 'routinized' in the system. You run to get permission for every little thing you do. The lack of democracy in schools is profound. Staff meetings are generally one-way shows, with the principal doing most of the talking. Policy is simply decided on, and your function is to implement it.

Our school was very efficient. Teachers were completely caught up in performing their bureaucratic functions – getting their marks in on time, preparing schedules and reports by the due date and so on. We were so busy being functionaries of the system that we never had time to think about our real role in society.

Professional accountability

If accountability is necessary in a democratic society to control corruption, negligence, incompetence and the abuse of trust, is holding teachers to account compatible with the idea of teaching as a profession? And are there forms of accountability *other* than bureaucratic and legal accountability that can function in teaching? The answer to both these questions lies in what Darling Hammond calls *professional accountability*.

Read the brief section headed 'Professional accountability' in Reading 8 if you haven't done so already. Darling Hammond suggests that professional accountability holds much more promise than legal or bureaucratic accountability. It provides a sort of 'forward-looking' accountability by emphasizing the regulation of practitioners at the point of entry into the profession, guaranteeing that whoever enters it has been thoroughly prepared for the demands of the work. Emphasis therefore falls on the preparation, evaluation, selection or 'screening' and certification of candidates for the profession.

In South Africa, teaching is moving in this direction through compulsory registration by the SACE and the Norms and Standards for Teacher Education (2000) document, which outlines processes of quality assurance for teacher education institutions and defines the norms and standards for evaluating teaching qualifications.

The Norms and Standards for Educators describes seven key roles that effectively combine to form a picture of a competent teacher. The qualifying teacher must achieve applied competence in various aspects of these roles. In other words they have to be able to demonstrate:

- the *practical ability* to perform various actions required of teachers, having considered carefully a range of possibilities;
- *foundational competence*, or the ability to understand the knowledge and theoretical thinking that underpins such possibilities; and
- the *reflexive ability* to connect practical performance and decision-making with an understanding of relevant theory, and to adapt to changing and unforeseen circumstances appropriately rather than in a haphazard way.

In exchange for this regulation at the point of entry into the profession, teachers gain relative autonomy of practice, for example, the deregulation of teaching. Unfortunately, the entry level qualifications of many South African teachers have not equipped them with the confidence to exercise any real degree of professional autonomy in the classroom. They feel threatened by the relative freedom that Curriculum 2005 offers them in how they plan their lessons and help learners achieve learning outcomes. Hence the need for in-service professional development directed at giving teachers this confidence.

Ideas are **compatible** when they exist in harmony.



How would you judge the action taken by Elmarie's principal in the light of professional accountability? She is certainly not qualified to teach economics. But what can her principal do if a qualified economics teacher is simply not available at the time?



Turn to Reading 9b, 'Duties and responsibilities of South African educators' (page 55 in your Reader), and read through the brief description of the seven key roles of teachers from the *Norms and Standards for Educators*. Some of these roles will be discussed in Section Five, when we deal with the teacher as a knowledge-worker.

As Darling Hammond argues, professional accountability promises society competent teachers, an expanding knowledge base, and an overriding concern for the welfare of learners. As legal accountability provides the possibility of redress in court *after* a teacher has been guilty of some misconduct, so professional accountability provides assurance of good service *prior* to the teacher's actual engagement in teaching.

What about holding teachers to account in their day-to-day practice? This is the business of codes of conduct such as that which binds all teachers registered with the SACE, and of appraisal systems such as the Manual for Teacher Appraisal negotiated at the ELRC. We need to examine these two key policies and assess whether they are:

- compatible with professionalism (professional development and professional status);
- compatible with democratic rather than bureaucratic management of teaching;
- likely to improve the quality of teaching and learning in South Africa, and restore teachers' professional self-esteem; and
- able to construct professionalism, accountability and teachers' self-view in a way that is beneficial for all concerned.

ACTIVITY 14: THE SACE CODE OF CONDUCT

Turn to the SACE Code of Conduct (Reading 9a, 'A code of conduct') and the extract from the ELRC 'Manual for teacher appraisal' (Reading 9c). These two official documents will probably have a very considerable bearing on your life in the years to come. So we strongly recommend that you read them actively, and keep in mind the following questions:

- 1 Do you find the Code of Conduct enabling for teachers, or do you think it is a 'whip' to beat teachers with? (Mention an example or two as evidence for your opinions.)
- 2 How do you think the Code might differ from policies of the past?
- 3 Towards which form of professionalism do the Code of Conduct and the appraisal system 'lean' (professionalization, or professional development)?
- 4 What sort of accountability – bureaucratic, legal or professional – do the Code and the appraisal policy 'construct'?
- 5 What kind of self-view do they construct for teachers?

Contrary to the impression created by many media reports that SACE is a body for 'whipping teachers into shape', we found only about half the clauses in the SACE Code of Conduct dealing with the educator and the learner to be prohibitive. The other half hold up positive principles for teachers to strive for:

- acknowledging the uniqueness, individuality and specific needs of each learner;
- recognizing learners as partners in their own education;
- helping them to develop values in line with the Bill of Rights and the Constitution; and
- promoting gender equality.

This pattern is carried into the other sections too, where principles like recognizing parents as partners in education and keeping abreast of educational trends and new developments outnumber prohibitive rules such as those prohibiting teachers from discussing confidential or official matters with unauthorized persons.

This is not to say that prohibitive rules are regrettable, or that they are not necessary. We are simply saying that the Code of Conduct is as much a set of enabling principles as it is a mechanism for controlling teachers. As such, it not only spells out what teachers may not do, it is designed so that teachers can internalize its positive, enabling principles as general guides and goals, with room to use their own discretion as to how to follow them.

This design will become very apparent if you compare the SACE Code of Conduct



You will need 60 minutes to read and digest the policies, and to respond to the questions.

with the kind of service conditions that prevailed in years gone by. The example here is from America, but the views of conduct appropriate for teachers were similar in many countries at the time.

TEACHER'S CONTRACT

This is an agreement between Miss, teacher, and the Board of Education of the School, whereby Miss agrees to teach for a period of eight months, beginning Sept. 1, 1923. The Board of Education agrees to pay Miss the sum of \$75 per month.

Miss agrees:

1. Not to get married. This contract becomes null and void immediately if the teacher marries.
2. Not to keep company with men.
3. To be home between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. unless in attendance at a school function.
4. Not to leave town at any time without the permission of the chairman of the Board of Trustees.
5. Not to smoke cigarettes. This contract becomes null and void immediately if the teacher is found smoking.
6. Not to drink beer, wine or whiskey. This contract becomes null and void immediately if the teacher is found drinking beer, wine or whiskey.
7. Not to ride in a carriage or automobile with any man except her brother or father.
8. Not to dress in bright colors.
9. Not to dye her hair.
10. To wear at least two petticoats.
11. Not to wear dresses more than two inches above the ankles.
12. Not to use face powder, mascara, or paint the lips.
13. To keep the schoolroom clean:
 - a. to sweep the classroom floor at least once daily.
 - b. to scrub the classroom floor at least once weekly with hot water and soap.
 - c. to clean the blackboard at least once daily.
 - d. to start the fire at 7:00 a.m. so the room will be warm at 8:30 a.m. when the children arrive.

(Source unknown)

Two things are especially interesting about the 1923 contract: there is not a single reference to actual teaching, and every clause is a mechanism of control, either a prohibitive rule or a rigid regulation. This contract is a very clear example of bureaucratic accountability, where it is only possible to hold teachers to account for complying with *regulations*, not for educational outcomes, which aren't even mentioned.

Compared with this document, the SACE Code is a model of commitment to professional development and democracy because:

- its architects include practising teachers;
- it is based on the Bill of Rights and the Constitution;

- it considers learners, parents and employers to be ‘partners in education’; and
- it requires teachers to exercise authority with compassion, respect the dignity and rights of child learners, and promote gender equality.

Clauses 7.1 and 9.1 of the Code require teachers to co-operate with colleagues and to ‘behave in such a way as to enhance the dignity and status of the profession’ (7.1). The Code does not encourage self-seeking aims, but several clauses incline towards professional development. Clause 2.2 insists that the quality of education in this country depends on the dedication, self-discipline and training of teachers. Clauses 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 require teachers to keep abreast of educational developments, promote the ongoing development of teaching as a profession, and provide professional support for new members of the profession.

At the time of writing, the 1999 Manual for Teacher Appraisal (Reading 9) is well on its way to being accepted by the same teachers who in 1990 participated in a defiance campaign against the appraisal policy introduced by the apartheid education authorities. Many teachers are ‘impressed by the fact that [this new] appraisal system [is] not marked by negative fault-finding, but [is] driven by a commitment to the professional development of teachers’ (National Teacher Appraisal Pilot Project Report, 1997: 54).

The SACE Code of Conduct and the appraisal policy create considerable scope for teachers to use their professional discretion in practising a number of principles, therefore they cannot be considered bureaucratic. The ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ are expressed in broad terms rather than as precise regulations. Obviously this Code can be used as the basis for a legal case of misconduct brought against an erring teacher, but the main, positive thrust of the Code is towards ensuring that teachers conduct themselves *professionally* rather than as bureaucratic regulation-followers.

Appraisal, too, is clearly no longer seen as a form of judgmental ‘inspection’ aimed at rewarding or penalizing teachers for compliance or non-compliance. Instead, as we can see from Reading 9c, it is aimed at development as much as it is aimed at making teachers accountable – to themselves as much as anyone else.

A simple test should suffice to highlight the self-view that is constructed by these two accountability mechanisms. Glance through each of them again, and ask yourself whether you feel that your self-esteem has been diminished or enhanced? Again, it might be helpful to imagine yourself as a teacher bound by the requirements of the 1923 contract and to ask the same question.

If the SACE Code of Conduct has any faults, these lie in what it leaves out. We think that one point that could have been more explicit is the promotion of non-violent means of resolving conflict, including the use of alternatives to corporal punishment.

However, as Brijraj says in the audiotape, the Code is a living document, and with teachers represented on SACE and the ELRC, it is very probable that the two accountability mechanisms considered here will be modified to fit changing circumstances and perceptions.

Beyond accountability

Finally we need to ask whether accountability mechanisms are *enough* to ensure that teaching quality and professional development are maintained, that a vibrant culture of teaching and learning is developed, and that teacher self-esteem is restored.

Our answer to the above question would have to be no. Accountability involves a sort of unspoken transaction and *obligation* between professional and client. As you have seen, it is part of an understood ‘bargain’ in which the freedom to use professional discretion is allowed because there are clear assurances that standards have been met.

There can be no doubt about the necessity of such social arrangements in a democracy. However, because it is an obligatory transaction, its power to motivate teachers to perform their multiple tasks to the best of their ability is limited, espe-

“
*The 1999 Manual for
 Teacher Appraisal is
 driven by a
 commitment to the
 professional
 development of
 teachers.*
 ”

“
**Would you be happy to
 have your own
 children taught by
 someone who is not
 under an obligation of
 accountability?**
 ”



In this activity you will need 10 minutes for the reading, and about 5 to 10 minutes to jot down points and questions.

cially when no-one is looking. For instance, one may be well-qualified and able to come across well within the context of appraisal, but mark homework in a slapdash way, or be careless in how one handles a delicate situation involving learners.

According to Eric Hoyle and Peter John (1995: 110),

Systems of accountability are vital to the attainment of quality education, but they are not in themselves sufficient. They must be balanced by responsibility.

Although ‘accountability’ and ‘responsibility’ are often used in such a way that they mean much the same thing, ‘responsibility’ is the broader concept. For example, I am being responsible if I accept that accountability is necessary, but the reverse does not apply.

Keeping in mind what we have said about accountability involving an obligatory transaction between teachers and society, responsibility involves a more *internal* and *intrinsic* commitment to principles of good practice and to a set of values that prioritize the interests of the learner, even when no-one else is aware of it. However, this does not mean that it is only a matter for individual conscience, as the next reading shows.

ACTIVITY 15: RESILIENT SCHOOLS

Look back to Section 2.9, where we described teachers who ‘give up’ in the face of difficulties. Do you know any such teachers? If not, imagine one, and as you read the extract from Pam Christie and Mark Potterton’s study of effective South African schools (Reading 10 on page 64 in your Reader), and the brief discussion below and on page 55, jot down a few points in your workbook that you might want to convey to this teacher, or questions that you might want to ask if you were the Head of Department.

Here responsibility is seen as a quality that goes beyond the obligations of accountability, as a characteristic that is crucial in those schools that have succeeded despite the odds against them. It is seen as a shared responsibility on the part of the whole staff, as well as an individual, internal commitment to the welfare of learners. Collectively taking responsibility for their own school, teachers in these ‘resilient’ schools do not act like victims, or sit around complaining and waiting for a government department to tell them what to do.

Let’s return for a moment to the particular problem Elmarie faces at Artis Secondary:

‘So what are you going to do, Elmarie?’ asked Peter.

‘Well, I suppose I could refuse to teach the economics class, and the Boss will have to do whatever he can to get a substitute economics teacher out of the Department, though he says it’s very unlikely. I don’t know, maybe that would be the best for the kids in the long run. But what if it takes ten weeks to get a replacement like it did the last time? Then they’ll have lost out on a term’s teaching. I’ve always been curious about economics whenever I’ve heard them talking about it on the news. I suppose I can give it a try, though I’ll be learning along with the kids, that’s for sure. And I won’t be going out much in the evenings.’

‘If you do decide to take it on,’ offered Peter, ‘I’ll suggest to the Boss that we share out your detention duties so that you can get home a bit earlier.’

Being responsible is essentially a moral commitment. It implies that one can be relied on by others, and by oneself, not to put one’s own interests first when this is inappropriate, and not just to act on one’s whims of the moment. It could even mean *opposing* an official accountability measure for good educational or moral reasons. If Elmarie was overcommitted and did not have time to prepare properly, she could

show a sense of responsibility by **not** agreeing to teach in a learning area for which she has no qualification.

Responsibility therefore goes 'deeper' than the explicit requirements of accountability. It is more closely associated with a 'calling' or 'vocation' such as we discussed in Section Two.



Take one last look back to what you wrote in Activity 8, and compare it with what you have learnt since.

3.7

Conclusion

We come back to the questions with which we introduced this section. We hope you have found some answers and suggest that you look back to the learning outcomes to assess yourself.

We started out by suggesting that, in addition to a sense of vocation, professionalism might be what's required for today's teachers to become 'part of the solution' rather than part of South Africa's education problems. Could a concept that seems to have so many different meanings hold one of the keys to the renewal of teachers and teaching in this country? This question led us to explore the many meanings attached to the term 'professionalism'.

After assessing teaching against the characteristics of generally recognized professions such as doctors and lawyers, we concluded that we should not assume that teaching is a profession, but rather think of professionalism as something to strive towards. This in turn led us to investigate different forms of professionalism. We did this by asking which forms would best help teachers in their efforts to serve learners as well as build their self-esteem by doing a job that others would recognize as professional.

We found that teachers did not have to make an either/or choice between status-seeking professionalization and professional development. There are some good reasons for teachers to pursue some of the aims of professionalization, but they need to prioritize, putting the professional development 'agenda' (and the learners) ahead of the professionalization one.

Since accountability to learners and parents is crucial to the idea of professional teaching, we also examined various forms of accountability. We found that teachers, individually and collectively, need to move from bureaucratic forms of accountability towards more professional forms, embracing reasonable minimum qualifications, a code of conduct established and maintained by teachers, and a democratic, developmental system of appraisal.

Finally, we found that even formal accountability measures such as these need to be accompanied by responsibility, a more internal and individual commitment to the interests of learners – something closely related to what we have called a 'vocation'.

But we also need to examine what *professionalism* demands of the teacher as the person responsible for organizing and maintaining an effective, safe environment for learners and learning, as a 'knowledge worker', and as someone likely to have a considerable influence on learners' values. In the following section, we address the question of how teachers can regain, or establish, their professional authority in the learning environment for which they have responsibility.

Key learning points

1. There are various meanings attached to the term 'profession'. Some have greater value than others, so teachers need to use the term with care.
2. Essentially, there are three elements that society recognizes as constituting a profession:
 - *Knowledge*. Professionals are expected to use considerable skill in non-routine, complex situations where interests are often in conflict and where simple techniques or 'recipe' knowledge are insufficient. Therefore they must be able to draw on a well-established, well-tested body of specialized systematic knowledge, requiring them to undergo a lengthy period of higher education.

- *Responsibility/accountability*. Professionals are required to act in the best interests of their clients, taking responsibility for their professional actions in performing a crucial social function. These and other professional obligations are often set down in an ethical code of conduct, according to which they can be held accountable.
 - *Autonomy*. Professionals, collectively and as individuals, enjoy considerable freedom from regulation in making professional decisions. In exchange, society expects the professional body to ensure the competence and accountability of its members by controlling admission to the profession, registration, responsibilities and conduct.
3. For teachers, professional status is not an accomplished fact, it is something to strive towards.
 4. The question of whether teachers have a right to strike or an obligation not to strike, is very much a professional question, involving issues of moral responsibility towards the client, and the complex nature of situations where different 'goods' are in conflict with each other.
 5. Different forms of professionalism have different goals:
 - *Professionalization* seeks to gain recognition for the professional status of an occupational group such as teachers. It is concerned with such aims as the pursuit of professional status and autonomy, the setting up of a self-governing professional body, and 'gate-keeping'.
 - *Professional development* aims to improve the quality of service provided and the professional competence of teachers in the interests of clients. Teaching and learning constantly develop and quality teaching requires continual professional development.
 6. Teachers need to prioritize professional development, so that their professional status has solid foundations. But in the light of the global trends towards de-professionalization, some aspects of professionalization remain important to ensure that teachers are not perceived as mere technicians.
 7. Of the various *forms* of professional accountability, two are particularly relevant to teachers in South Africa:
 - *Bureaucratic accountability* ensures that rules and standard procedures are in place to control the actions of teachers. Procedures and services are standardized, and inspectors check that teachers comply; there is little scope for professional development or discretion.
 - *Professional accountability* ensures, 'in exchange' for relative autonomy of practice, that whoever enters the profession has been thoroughly prepared. Hence 'screening' and certification are important, and all teachers must be registered (by SACE, in South Africa). Professional accountability promises competent teachers, an expanding knowledge base, and an overriding concern for the welfare of learners. It also includes measures such as a code of conduct and an appraisal system.
 9. Codes of conduct and appraisal systems may be bureaucratic or professional in nature. To be professional, they need to be both democratic and clearly focused on teachers' professional development (both the SACE Code and the ELRC appraisal system are). They need to provide professional guidance and allow scope for professional discretion rather than emphasize regulation-following.
 10. Accountability is not enough to ensure professionalism among teachers. Responsibility is also a key requirement. It is a more internal commitment to principles of good practice and to the interests of the learner, and is therefore associated with the idea of a 'calling' or 'vocation'.

Tutor-marked assignment 1

After several years of teacher retrenchment and low enrolment in teacher education, there is once more a demand for teachers. Imagine that a young cousin, nephew or niece has approached you for advice on becoming a teacher. You sense from what this relative says that he or she has not thought about this career choice in much depth, and may be partly motivated by such benefits as supposedly long holidays and short working days.

- 1 Compose the letter you would write to this person, in which you set out what you see as being required of teachers in South Africa today. Your letter should be 800 to 1000 words long (about three A4 pages, handwritten or typed in double spacing).**
- 2 In planning what to write, engage with the ideas you have read about in Sections Two and Three. Try to get the recipient of your letter to think seriously and critically about:**
 - teaching as a vocation;
 - the contexts in which teachers will be working; and
 - professionalism and accountability.**Demonstrate your understanding of these concepts in some depth.**
- 3 Avoid being merely sentimental and superficial about teaching. For instance, do not merely express 'how wonderful it is to work with children, and to prepare the leaders of tomorrow'.**
- 4 Under no circumstances may you repeat sections of text from either the Learning Guide or the Reader. Try to turn the ideas you find here into questions for your relative to answer. For instance: 'Before you buy a timeshare on the South Coast, have you thought about the time you will need to spend during some holidays doing further study or attending in-service courses?'**