

## Chapter 6

# Does the Teaching Profession Still Need Universities?

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*It is difficult to say what are the determinants of professional status, but university connection(s) ... are certainly not unimportant... The teaching profession has valued the links with the universities as an important source of professional standing.*

Hoyle, 1982: 165

Throughout his career, a core theme running through Eric Hoyle's writing has been his concern with the development of the teaching profession. Building on the work of classic American sociologists such as Everett Hughes and D.C. Lortie, for over 30 years Hoyle has been an observer, commentator and analyst of the teaching profession in England, highlighting advances, challenges and contradictions in the profession's changing fortunes.

One factor that Hoyle has consistently seen as important in his analysis of the profession is its changing relationship with universities. From his earliest writings (Hoyle, 1974), Hoyle has considered universities important for the advancement of the teaching profession for two, closely interrelated reasons. Firstly they are important because they contribute to the process of 'professionalization'. Drawing his analysis from the sociology of the professions, Hoyle has argued that professionalization is an essentially political process; it is concerned with the advancement of the status of a profession. Because of their own status in society, a close association with universities, for initial training, for continuing professional development and for research, can therefore contribute to the political advancement of the teaching profession, helping to legitimate the status of its professional knowledge.

Secondly, universities are important because of their contribution to the development of what in 1974 he termed 'extended professionalism' or later, professional development (Hoyle, 1982). Extended professionalism involves teachers in increasing the breadth as well as the depth of their understanding of their own practice. According to Hoyle, extended professionalism develops in two ways: it develops both through greater forms of collaboration between individual teachers and other professionals and through the changing forms of professional knowledge that come about when teachers engage with theory and research. Although Hoyle has always acknowledged that there is a highly complex relationship between university based knowledge and professional practice (see Hoyle and John, 1995, in particular), he

argues that it is through engaging with theory and research that teaching becomes increasingly seen as a rational rather than an intuitive activity; it is through such engagement that professional skills and knowledge can indeed become 'extended'.

In reality, the relationship between the teaching profession and higher education has always been fragile and unstable; there have been periods of strength followed by periods of weakness (Gardner, 1996). Nevertheless, for Hoyle, from his earliest writings, the engagement of the university sector has been central to his aspirations for the development of the teaching profession. Because of this commitment, by 1982, following a period of a relatively strong relationship between the two sectors (Wilkin, 1996), with considerable foresight, he was warning of the possible implications of the 'turn towards the practical' that he saw developing in both teacher education and research. He argued that while some sections of the profession, and particularly the government, might welcome such moves, undermining traditional links with the university sector could have considerable negative implications for the long term standing of the profession as a whole. For example, the development of

*School-based initial teacher training could be taken as a case for actually reducing the period of institution based training. School-focused in-service training could be taken as an indication that there was no need to fund secondments, full time courses and higher degree work. The involvement of teachers in research, particularly action-research, could provide an argument for the reduction of funds for the more fundamental and more detached types of research undertaken by projects currently funded via government agencies.*

(Hoyle, 1982: 166)

These observations, though at the time merely speculative, were indeed prescient. The intervening 25 years have seen almost all of his predictions realised. Developments in the 1990s, with the establishment of the Teacher Training Agency (now the Training and Development Agency (TDA) for Schools) with its emphasis on competences and 'standards' and the rapid expansion of new routes into teaching, mean that although many courses remain HEI-led (Furlong et al., 2000) universities are no longer seen as 'essential' partners. No longer is engagement with university-based knowledge, and especially theory, research and scholarship, seen as a key ingredient in the early professional development teachers (Furlong, 2005).

The changes to continuing professional development (CPD) were even more rapid: indeed, the reference back to secondments, full time courses and funded higher degree programmes for teachers, really is a reference to a bygone age. By the late 1980s, most of these sorts of opportunities for teachers to engage in-depth with university-based knowledge had been abolished. Today, the vast majority of CPD is provided through schools and often by schools themselves. Again, while universities may well contribute to such programmes on a regular basis (for example, through the TDA's Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD) scheme), their involvement is no longer seen as an essential component for most forms of professional development, even at the highest level – the National Professional Qualification for Head Teachers. As a consequence, we are now in the strange position where there is a flourishing demand from teachers for part time masters and

doctoral degrees, often funded by teachers themselves. But full time courses have largely become the province of international students and the handful of ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) students being trained to work as educational researchers; this now seen as a quite different profession.

The position in relation to research is more complex but no more positive. Interest in forms of applied and practice-based research, including action research, has certainly increased, although unlike Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2002) and Wales (General Teaching Council for Wales, 2007) it has yet to find a consistent place in professional development frameworks in England. But despite the growing popularity of forms of action research amongst teachers, links with universities have been piecemeal and largely voluntary in nationally sponsored schemes such as the Best Practice Scholarship Scheme (Furlong and Salisbury, 1995) and Networked Learning Communities (Campbell and Keating, 2005). As a result, there has been considerable debate about the quality and generalisability of the outcomes of such research and development work (Foster, 1999). Other pressures, most particularly from the RAE, have served to undermine the research capacity of many universities in the UK. While the numbers of higher education institutions designated as universities has expanded substantially over the last 30 years, the concentration of research funding means that now only about one third of university departments of education have the financial underpinning to support a vibrant research culture (Dadds and Kynch, 2004). One result of this and the collapse of the full time CPD market described above has been the current demographic crisis in university departments of education recently highlighted by the ESRC (Mills et al., 2006); now over 50% of current educational researchers are over the age of 50. Moreover, the government-led emphasis on 'the practical' in initial training and in CPD since the 1990s has done little to support the professionalization of research itself; as a result, criticisms of the quality of educational research in this country continue.

Overall, this formal exclusion of higher education from so many dimensions of professionalism is well captured in the TTA's 2005 document outlining their extended remit. As the renamed Training and Development Agency for Schools, they took on responsibility for overseeing all forms of initial and in-service education of teachers, and the wider school workforce. In many ways, therefore, their vision can be seen as encapsulating current national policy on the development of the teaching profession.

#### Our stakeholders and customers

**Starting from what schools need**, we will work in partnership with a range of organisations, including:

**Schools, to be their first point of reference** for guidance on all aspects of training and development. Head teachers and school leadership teams will be key customers

**Providers of initial teacher training**, to ensure the availability of good quality training that prepares teachers to join school teams

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**New and existing contractors and suppliers**, to help us deliver the best possible services and achieve value for money

**Local partners**, including local education authorities and training providers so that our plans and proposals support school and local priorities

**Government and national organisations**, to coordinate existing initiatives and bring coherence to the introduction of new products and services

TDA (2005)

Setting aside comments on the language ('customers', 'providers', 'suppliers', etc.) what is clear is that there is no explicit reference here either to individual teachers (apart from head teachers) or to universities. The structured links between the teaching profession and the university sector that Hoyle looked for have, over the last 30 years, been almost expunged.

Given this turn of events, one is forced to ask – does it matter? Has the fact that, today, the teaching profession has a less systematic engagement with the university sector than Hoyle might aspire for, in reality undermined the development of the profession – either its professionalization or the development of individual teachers' professionalism?

Of course it can be persuasively argued that the recent past has seen teachers' professionalism seriously undermined – indeed Hoyle (1995) himself has argued that being professional has been reduced in scope to being an 'effective service deliverer'. We have seen new forms of managerialism including the dramatically increased emphasis on institutional and personal performativity (Ball, 2003) that comes about with increased specification of service demands and ever more sophisticated forms of performance data; the growing balkanization of teachers where teachers' traditional outward orientations to 'the profession' are replaced by narrow, more inward looking forms of competition (Hargreaves, 1994); and growing intervention by the Government into pedagogy itself through a range of different prescribed 'national strategies' – for literacy, for numeracy and for Key Stage 3.

On the other hand, while it remains the case that teaching is no nearer being recognised as a 'full profession' than in the past, on a par with say medicine or law, one could argue that the status of teaching, particularly in recent years under New Labour, has increased significantly. Certainly the popularity of teaching as a career has improved: current concerns are about the oversupply of newly qualified teachers rather than about crises of recruitment. In addition, the conditions of teaching have improved substantially: staff student ratios have been reduced with over 20,000 additional teachers in post in England since 1997; there is higher pay, for beginning teachers and especially for senior teachers; and workforce remodelling has meant far more classroom support than in the past with teachers taking on new responsibilities for managing classroom assistants and, with the Every Child Matters agenda, working directly with a range of other professionals.

In addition, there are now substantial opportunities for new forms of extended professionalism through networking. Virtually every government-led initiative (from Training Schools to Trust Schools, from Advanced Skills Teachers to the Excellence in Cities programme) now includes the requirement that teachers themselves will work collaboratively with others in their own school and beyond in order to support the development and dissemination of good practice (Reid et al., 2004). And schools themselves are expected to take lead responsibility in assessing and responding to their staff's professional development needs, where appropriate 'purchasing' professional development opportunities from a wide range of providers – Local Authorities, private consultants and universities. On the surface at least it would seem that government policy has taken seriously David Hargreaves' plea for the development of the 'knowledge creating school', where schools take the lead in their own development, where there is a high volume of internal debate and professional networking, where there are regular opportunities for reflection, enquiry and dialogue and where there is a culture of 'no blame' experimentation and challenge (Hargreaves, 2003).

Teachers certainly experience a very different world from the one that Hoyle was commenting on in the early 1980s and most of these developments have been achieved in ways that specifically exclude the university sector in any systematic way. Does this then mean that the teaching profession does not need the university sector any more, either politically in terms of professionalization or in terms of developing teachers' professionalism? Has teaching, through strong and detailed government intervention, started to find a different way of increasing its professional standing in society? I, and I suspect Hoyle himself, would suggest not.

In the remainder of this paper I will argue that, while there have been some improvements in the professionalism of some teachers and indeed in the standing of the profession as a whole, overall, its position remains deeply contradictory; there are still significant barriers to teaching being seen as a full profession, barriers which a proper engagement with higher education could assist in overcoming. A proper engagement with higher education offers, I will suggest, not merely political advantage in terms of some kind of reflected status, but a genuine status, derived from extended professionalism both at the individual and at the collective level of teaching as a whole. And I will also argue that now, following two decades of 'the turn to the practical', despite the real challenges involved, the opportunity is there for the teaching profession to engage with universities in new and more productive ways than in the past.

## Research

At the most general level, teaching needs good research to support good policy and practice. Although there is widespread scepticism that research findings can be used directly to guide the action of policy makers or practitioners, there is now a growing commitment to the view that research should be part of a 'policy cycle',

entering into that cycle in a number of different ways. Different forms of research can, for example, be used as part of policy planning: putting issues on the policy agenda; helping policy makers recognise their current and future information requirements; reviewing what is already known. It can also be part of policy development: piloting new initiatives; developing specialised policy instruments, for example, new forms of assessment, specialised curriculum materials. And it has a role in policy evaluation: finding out what worked, what did not work; linking past experience back to further policy planning.

As Selby-Smith (2000) demonstrated in his study of policy making in vocational education in Australia:

*The policy process is characterised by a number of stages (and) research of different types can potentially play a part at each stage. (research can be used in)...problem identification and agenda setting, (or) linked with the subsequent policy formulation phase...Research can also contribute at the evaluation phase, which provides opportunities for programme fine-tuning and adjustment to changing circumstances*

(Selby-Smith, 2000: 3)

The role of the universities remains essential here although, as has already been indicated, there are major challenges in terms of research capacity, training, demography, etc. Moreover, despite significant improvements, there remain concerns about the quality of some educational research. What is clear, however, is that the production of high quality, policy-oriented research does serve to increase the professionalism of teaching. It does this both through its contribution to the status of the field – its professionalization – and by increasing the depth and breadth of knowledge available to individual teachers – to their professionalism. At the broadest level, therefore, the teaching profession does have an interest in the maintenance and development of high quality research in the field of education.

## **School-Led Research and Development**

But despite the importance of educational research, the truth is that, for the most part, the development of educational policy, and particularly the development of practice, does not happen through formal research. As I have already indicated, contemporary policy to a significant degree sees schools themselves as the power-houses of innovation and development – working within national frameworks, but increasingly taking responsibility for their own development.

But is it true that school-led research and development does not need higher education? Or, to put it more modestly, does higher education have nothing to offer here? A number of different initiatives have been piloted in recent years to support school-led research and development, most notably the Networked Learning Communities initiative (2002–2006) in which 134 school networks took part, and the Best Practice Research Scholarship Scheme (BPRS). The BPRS scheme, sponsored by the DfES, ran from 2000 to 2004 during which time over 3,000 teachers were awarded a small grant of up to £3,000 to undertake research and development

in relation to their own teaching. The grant money was to be spent on a range of activities in support of their research, including the opportunity to buy mentoring support. They could if they chose purchase mentoring support from higher education, but that was not mandatory.

In 2002–2003, I and colleagues from Cardiff University (Furlong and Salisbury, 2005) undertook an evaluation of the BPRS scheme on behalf of the DfES. During our evaluation, we were struck by the similarities between what we saw happening and what Michael Gibbons and colleagues (Gibbons et al., 1994) characterise as ‘the new production of knowledge’. Very much in line with the concept of the ‘knowledge creating school’, they argue that universities, for so long the home of science, are no longer the only places in modern societies where knowledge is produced. Rather, Gibbons et al argue, the growing demand for specialist knowledge in our increasingly technical society and the expansion of the numbers of potential knowledge producers (as a result of the massification of higher education) mean that in many sectors of society (including schools), conditions are now set for the emergence of a new model of knowledge production – what they call Mode 2.

Mode 2 knowledge, they suggest, will be more transitory, more context specific, more frequently located within individuals themselves and their particular working context than in scientific journals. In short, it is, at least in part, ‘embedded’ knowledge. The criteria for judging its quality, they argue, must also be different; they must include judgments about its impact on practice and its impact on practitioners themselves.

During our evaluation we witnessed many impressive school-based initiatives which took on the characteristics of ‘Mode 2’ knowledge production; teachers were undertaking exciting and valuable research and development projects, many of which had a real impact on their own practice and that of others in their schools.

But however exciting the scheme was, we also noticed that projects were hugely variable in quality. Too many teachers, we observed, did not read or read too narrowly or uncritically before designing their studies; as a result, they were constantly reinventing the wheel. Another common weakness was that many teachers were not sceptical enough about their own research findings. Too often, relatively modest findings from very small scale interventions were taken as justifications for quite significant changes in practice. A further tension was that, because of the commitment to context specific development, in many respects a real strength, the opportunities for dissemination and the accumulation of knowledge were severely restricted.

What we came to recognize during our evaluation was that, despite the obvious strengths of school-led research and development, if it was to be of good quality, and to contribute to knowledge beyond its specific context, it should not happen alone. If we are to be confident in this approach to research and development, teachers and schools not only need linking with each other; they also need linking with those in higher education and elsewhere who are themselves experienced researchers, who have a wide knowledge and experience of using of high quality research strategies and a breadth and depth knowledge of current research studies that are relevant to practice. This is not to suggest that as, perhaps in the past, those in universities should be in the lead; one of the great strengths of the BPRS and similar schemes is

that it puts teachers themselves in the driving seat. It is however to suggest that a proper national system that supports school-led research and development does need to develop supportive partnerships between teachers, schools and those in higher education. One of the weaknesses of the BPRS scheme and indeed the much larger Networked Learning Communities scheme was that this was not mandatory (Campbell and Keating, 2005). Whether those weaknesses are now being addressed by the TDA's more recent Postgraduate Professional Development programme remains to be seen, although there are some positive signs (TDA, 2007a).

## **Professional Education – Initial Teacher Training**

Another dimension in the 'turn to the practical' noted by Hoyle concerns initial teacher education, or what is now in England firmly called initial teacher training. Here there have been major changes. In the course of one generation we have moved from a position where universities and university-based knowledge dominated training to a position where practical training in schools is now virtually the exclusive focus of the professional preparation process. In many ways, schools are now in the lead in initial teacher training and rightly so. Even in courses formally provided by universities, students spend a majority of their time in school; and the current curriculum, which is strongly centrally prescribed, means that the focus of courses is almost exclusively on practical work in schools, even when students are based in the university. For the universities, the transition to this school-based model of training was a painful one with the sector having to learn to be much more modest about its potential contribution. Personally, I believe that in broad measure the transition has been right.

But do we now need universities at all here? As indicated above, the government does not appear to think so. The establishment of the Graduate Teaching Programme (where schools can recruit and train their own teachers) now accounts for about 13% of training places a year and the continuing role of entirely schools-led schemes (School Centred Initial Teacher Training schemes) makes it clear that they do not see universities as essential. Universities might be practically useful in terms of organising training programmes but they do not add anything distinctive; they have nothing 'essential' to offer. And after 15 years of the school-based model, and the designation of more than 240 schools as specialist Training Schools, more and more teachers might well agree with them (Brooks, 2006). Moreover, the development of standards, which now in their latest iteration (TDA, 2007b) have been written so that they are compatible with 'the whole school workforce', further marginalises university-based knowledge. The standards, although apparently common, can be achieved in so many different ways on different types of training programme, and by different sorts of professional, that the distinctive knowledge base of teachers as professionals is obscured, marginalised.

I would suggest that what schools contribute to initial training is vitally important; it is central. But however good it is, on its own it is not enough in the launching of a



new professional in his or her career. Indeed, to think so is to fall prey to a peculiarly narrow form of English pragmatism. Such an approach would be unthinkable elsewhere in Europe – where it is assumed that before even entering professional training students must have high level academic qualifications. In many countries – Italy, Denmark – a Masters degree in a curriculum subject is necessary before candidates can even apply for training; and in France, trainees take the equivalent of a Masters in education – studying theories of pedagogy and the didactics of their subject – before they begin their year’s highly practical training. The fact that the teaching profession is held in higher regard in these countries than in England is perhaps no coincidence. I would not suggest that these more academic models are themselves perfect, but are we so confident that we think we have nothing to learn from them? Can genuinely professional initial preparation really be achieved entirely ‘on the job’?

As Hirst (1996) has argued, however important practical work in school, however central it must be in the design of our programmes, new teachers also need to be exposed to ‘the best that is known’ in terms of teaching and learning in their area of specialism. Surely that is our duty as professionals ourselves involved in preparing those who are going to follow us? That must imply some role for professional preparation that goes beyond the specifics of working in this school with these pupils on this scheme of work.

I would also suggest that young professionals need to ask not only how to do something but also ‘why’. Schools are not necessarily the best places to ask ‘why’ questions; they are not seminars, they are about taking action. Asking ‘why’, questioning, challenging, critiquing – these activities are central to what a university is. Just as universities never could provide effective practical training in learning to teach – it was not their essential purpose – so I would argue that schools are not the best place for introducing new teachers ‘to the best that is known’ and to the critique of current practice. All of these elements are essential, I would argue, in the highest quality professional education; that is why the notion of partnership is so important. But for this to be achieved, the notion of ‘partnership’ needs to be seen not as it has become for the TDA, a mere organisational principle. Rather it needs to be seen as an epistemological principle which recognises the different forms of knowledge – some of which are indeed contradictory and in tension – that young professionals should master (Furlong et al., 2006).

## **Professional Education – Continuing Professional Development**

One might make similar arguments about CPD. The development of school-based and school-led CPD over the last generation has been hugely important. It has allowed schools to take the leading role in further professional training. In my view this has strengthened the profession significantly, made the teaching profession and individual schools more confident that they are able to contribute to the development of their own profession instead of simply relying on others. The linking of CPD to national strategies also makes sense. We have moved a long way in the last generation

from a position when CPD was something that was defined and led by the university sector and from when the learning needs of individual teachers were always put before the learning needs of schools. As the incoming Labour Government stated over 10 years ago: 'The time has long gone when isolated unaccountable professionals made curriculum and pedagogical decisions alone, without reference to the outside world' (DFEE, 1998:14). We cannot and should not return to those earlier times. As Elmore (2002) reminds us, the demands of institutional accountability will not go away; it is because of this that professional education and indeed professional responsibility must be aligned at the personal, institutional and formal level. The emergence of schools as the key focus and provider of contemporary CPD is no coincidence; it is a natural and appropriate response to increased forms of institutional accountability.

But again one must ask, is CPD offered by schools themselves, by local authorities and by private training providers all that the profession needs? Surely teachers, at some points in their career, have a right to opt for forms of CPD on their terms, not on terms defined by the government or by their head teachers. One of the reasons that the BPRS and the current PPD schemes are so popular, and unleash such energy, is precisely because they have encouraged teachers to define their own learning needs within school and national priorities. In addition, just like students in initial training, experienced teachers also need to do more than share their experience with fellow practitioners; they also need opportunities to engage with 'the best that is known' and on some occasions to step outside what they are doing and ask the question 'why?'

What is needed in CPD is something equivalent to the best partnerships we have established in initial training. Schools, rather than universities, need to be centrally in control of defining their own learning needs. They also need to be key contributors to training itself: focusing training in the specific context of the school; sharing good practice through networking – these are all extremely valuable strategies for making CPD worthwhile both for individual teachers and for schools. But schools also need to be able to draw on what universities have to offer – not merely as a service provider, not merely on a piecemeal, voluntary basis – but in the systematic and structured way that can only come about through formalised partnerships. Again, this is not to put universities in the lead. Far from it. Rather it is to recognise the critical if partial role they can play in supporting the highest quality in-service education that can lead to a genuine extended professionalism. Moreover, there are growing numbers of examples of this approach to CPD internationally – the Australian 'Innovative Links Project' (Sachs, 1999) scheme, Huberman's (1992) work notions of 'outsiders' and 'insiders' in professional development, and closer to home the Scottish Chartered Teacher Scheme. England of course continues to experiment with such approaches, currently through the PPD programme but, like so many initiatives under New Labour, these experiments are seldom institutionalised as a right for all teachers and are often short lived. As such they seem to imply the deep ambivalence on the part of government about a form of professional education that prioritises the needs of individual teachers over those of the central state.

## Conclusion

I opened this paper by referring to Hoyle's concerns, expressed in 1982, about the implications of 'the turn to the practical' in teacher education and research, and how it might serve to undermine the link between the teaching profession and universities. What I have tried to show is that Hoyle was right to be concerned; those links were and continue to be seriously undermined in a whole range of different ways. However, I have also tried to acknowledge that the turn to the practical has not been all negative in its consequences. Over the last 25 years, the teaching profession has grown substantially in terms of its confidence as a major contributor to professional learning – in initial teacher education, in CPD and in forms of school based research. Moreover, everything that we now know about the complexities of professional knowledge insists that we should indeed place 'the practical' at the heart of professional learning and development.

In comparison with other countries, this reifying of the practical in professional learning can be seen as constituting a huge 'English experiment', an experiment that, without the involvement of universities, has enhanced teachers' own sense of their professionalism. While in many other arenas of professional activity, ordinary teachers have seen their opportunities for agency and professional development closed down, in the area of professional education itself there have indeed been important new opportunities.

But despite the value of this 'experiment' and despite its evident popularity with many teachers, I have also tried to demonstrate that it is not sufficient in itself. For all the possibilities of extended professionalism that have come about through new responsibilities and new forms of networking, the severing of systematic engagement with universities has served to curtail what Hoyle, back in 1974, identified as the other important factor for developing extended professionalism – engagement with theory, research and scholarship.

It may be that, in the long march of the profession, a 25 break away from its previous subservient relationship with those in universities was necessary for the teaching profession. Whether or not that is the case, I would suggest that the last 25 years have now put us in a position where it is possible to imagine a proper more adult relationship between the universities and the profession; a relationship that recognises and values the complexity and partiality of different forms of professional knowledge but that sees 'the practical' as needing to be in the lead. Are we ready to live with those complexities and uncertainties; are we now ready genuinely to value different forms of professional knowledge? I think so.

However, for that to happen, it is clear to me that teachers in England do need to be given the opportunity, once again, to engage in systematic and sustained ways with universities – in their initial training, in their CPD and in forms of school-based research and development. Not, as I have tried to argue, in old ways, where universities take the lead, but in new collaborative partnerships where those in schools can draw effectively for themselves on the forms of knowledge and can critique that which universities have to offer.

What an adult and systematic engagement with universities could now give the teaching profession is help in increasing professionalization in genuine ways – not merely, as in the past, through reflected status, but through the development of new, richer and deeper forms of profession knowledge; knowledge that is genuinely grounded in the practice of teaching. It is this, I would suggest that would help to extend teachers’ professionalism; it is this, I would suggest that would help to raise the status of the teaching profession as a whole even further.

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