The Meaning and Practice of Professionalism: Divisions in New Labour

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Introduction

The socio-historical and philosophical nature that shapes and forms professionalism is not only a complex conceptual construct, but also potentially contentious on the grounds that it could be inter-dependent on social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, Searle, 1995) and is normally determined by consensual agreement surrounding the conceptual knowledge and beliefs of 'profession' and 'professionality' (Hargreaves, 2000; Evans, 2008; Hoyle, 1982, 2001), often by institutions, industries and associations that model and regulate them. This in turn is then ultimately applied (or contested) via the autonomy of the practitioners (professionals) for the benefit of the role, skills and service they extend to their duty. However, fundamental questions and critical concerns emerge from the materialisation of such a construct, such as what qualities and (equally important) who has the authority to constitute the terms that determine what is or isn't a profession? Whilst, in dichotomous tandem, who is qualified to clearly define the meaning as to what is or who constitutes as a professional engaged within an occupational sphere of a profession, both in the traditional and modern sense of that term.

These enquiries, often coupled with the approach of how an individual or occupation becomes professionalised it could be argued, are also comparatively complicated. The abstraction surrounding the path to professionalism follows an inquisitive logic with issues located in how, where, when and why it manifests, along with who or which forces dictate, govern, guide and control the concept, to ultimately the effects and values this has on those subordinate or resistant to the ideals of it (Whitty, 2000, 2006).

The purpose of this study seeks to build a better understanding of the epistemological background and ontological assumptions that define and locate professionalism. This applies primarily to those working in the area of higher education. The paper uses structural functionalism to understand socio-historical formations and what they have contributed to the conceptual meaning of professionalism, and how this has evolved in terms of continental sociology along with some of the major concepts that have contributed to it (Sciulli, 2005). It will then focus on professionalism in education and the role government institutions and external factors are playing in determining, shaping and prescribing it and the critical issues teachers now currently face as a result of such interventions and demands.

Following this example, the focus of teacher professionalism moves into the evaluation of teacher professional standards more specifically through the use of student evaluations of teaching (SETs) as the most effective method of not only collecting data on a teacher's work in class, but as a reliable instrument to make personnel decisions. The study will then review some of the literature which grabbles with the nature of the validity of SETs which has emerged in recent years particularly in North America, where SETs are still the most popular method of evaluating teaching. Finally, it concludes with discussing what the implications of the current occupational culture are and what that especially means to qualified professionals serving in the field of higher education.

Historical Background

There has been a lot of confusion concerning the terms profession, professional, professionalism and professionalization and our social perceptions of them (Jussim, 1991). If we were to perform some sort of linguistic, morphological, dissection on the lexicon stem of professionalism, we would find *professional, profession* and *profess*. All these derivative words bear some relation to each other, but also remain somewhat context driven (Nagy, Herman & Anderson, 1985). "Professionals profess" wrote Everett Hughes, the American sociologist in his article titled 'Professions' in the '*Daedalus*' in 1963, "they profess to know better than others the nature of certain matters. . . This is the essence of the professional idea" (p. 655). For Andrew Abbott, this "nature of certain matters" that Everett described is, "abstract knowledge" and being able to utilise it in practice. Abbott said, "professions are exclusive occupational groups applying somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases" (1988, p. 8). Going further back, Abraham Flexner, who wrote in 1915 that professionals are "intellectual and learned; they are in the next place definitely practical. No profession can be merely academic and theoretic; the professional man must have an absolutely definite and practical object" (reprinted 2001, p. 155).

Historically, professionals had knowledge that laypersons did not possess, thus, "practice rests upon some branch of knowledge to which the professionals are privy by virtue of long study and intuition and apprenticeship under masters already in the profession" (Hughes, 1963, p. 656). Another interesting correlation to these three widely spread views across the 20th century is the connection between the professions and notions of status through social class (Hoyle, 2001). This 'exclusive occupation' that Abbot refers to in the 1980's, was on the crest of an economic wave of Ronald Reagan's neo-conservatism. A similar indicator was also underlined by Hughes in the early 60's under Kennedy at the height of industrial power in the west, when he declared, "Professionals come near the top of the prestige ratings" (p. 665). For Flexner, however, 100 years ago in the midst of WWI at a time of one of deadliest conflicts in human history, professionalism was not motivated by status, but essentially 'altruism', professionals viewing themselves as working for some aspect of the greater good of society.

In the UK, all occupations have also been traditionally connected to social class (SC), reflected in the national statistics for social economic classification (NS-SEC) dating back to 1913 (ONS, 2010), which was originally established to monitor the population of infant mortality and life expectancy. Professionals according to this scale, enjoy a better standard of living, earn higher than average salaries and probably own property. Therefore, we might assume that the professional of the last century was not only well educated with specialist knowledge for practical purposes beneficial to society, but also fitted comfortably within Max Weber's (2010) [1922] tier of middle class stratification, with pride of place in an attained status and sheltered within the confines of a social institution.

According to Schön (1984) at the start of the post-modern digital age, he contemplated that perhaps Thorstein Veblen's (1934) [1899] dream of a professionally run society could be finally reaching realisation. Furthermore, although this connection to status and power, or as George Bernard Shaw (1906) wrote, that "all professions are conspiracies against the laity", doesn't quite fit the mould by today's standards, as workers within the professional SC make up 19.5% of the total British workforce (SPADA, 2009), while other developing countries in the OECD follow a similar pattern. However, the ideology of occupational groups and individuals aspiring for professional status and the concept of professionalism is increasing, but at the same time the whole work ethos is changing alongside this pace, or as Linda Evans (2008) puts it, has remodelled and altered its image and "emerged with scars to prove it or a make-over" depending your lens on the subject (p. 20).

Significant transitions and changes have taken place and now professional culture is (or should be) more generally concerned with issues of equality, diversity and fairness. The days of the old network of gentleman's clubs, lodges and societies and the charitable deeds of Flexner are increasingly becoming antiquated

and obsolete. Although, that is not to say that this reciprocal culture has been eradicated completely and some professionals who are, very much, in the Roman sense 'worth their salt' and well connected through institutional networks work almost entirely within very tight and elite circles virtually on reputation alone. This makes the professionals themselves literally a commodity to be bought, sold, transferred or loaned.

Going back to Flexner's idea of professionalism, it is also not too far removed in the post-modern occupational and work culture. In fact, even the whole notion of working not for capital gain, but working in the service of altruism for others who benefit greatly from the presence, skills and knowledge of a professional, is probably not as out of date (or fashion) as we might assume, as not all modern professionals are motivated financially. Voluntary NGOs have a not only large, but a growing presence in a wide range of professional fields. Organisations, like '*Médecins Sans Frontières*', are an excellent example of a professional body whose members are motivated purely by humanitarian need, often risking their own lives in their pursuit to save others. This altruism is not restricted to the medical profession either, there are multiple human rights lawyers around the world, in organisational networks, such as '*Amnesty International*', who could easily make a comfortable living in any city courtroom, but dedicate their lives, skills and knowledge driven by a strong desire for change, while putting all their faith in non-violent methods and the social institution they represent (namely the law) to deliver a more humane and socially just society. Likewise, there are a vast number of voluntary professionals working tirelessly in organisations and civic societies that house everything from sociologists to journalists, environmental experts to administrators and a whole plethora of scientific researchers. It would also be fairly arrogant, regardless of one's religious or secular view, to ignore or brush aside the achievements various faith communities and the role professional theologians have done (and continue to do) helping millions of people around the world on a daily basis led almost totally unconditionally on a set of values and the spirituality of their religious belief.

Therefore, professionalism, even in its ultra post-modern sense, still has service or duty at the forefront of its core values. Perhaps, this would then signify that the "make over" that professionalism has underwent according to Evans (2008) is perhaps only the style, practice and the attire underneath this new glossy exterior beats the same professional heart that has *always* existed, one that is purely dedicated to serve in the manner professionals are accustomed to, trained and skilled to do, working for the needs of others (who depend on them) and not primarily for their own agenda or financial gain. This renders an almost gallant image, of the new-altruistic, 21st century professional, disaffected by capitalist neo-liberal forces of the millennium, interconnected in gadget run social networks, multi-tasking, downloading, uploading, video conferencing and flying in and out of terminal buildings around the world. The term 'out of office' no longer applies, and the new professional has a virtual presence, equipped to go to work just about anywhere at any time with unlimited bandwidths and streams of wi-fi hotspots in coffee shops, restaurants and bars, all aesthetically designed to accommodate the professional within the all too familiar new social culture we find ourselves increasingly attached to and dependent on. There is now a convergence between work and social life for the new professional, and often the division between the two are becoming increasingly blurred. This brief description is a closer reality to the life of today's professional within the mechanism of the global village and; furthermore, it is an increasingly larger phenomenon and vastly more transnational in its scale than it was in Flexner's time a century ago.

However, what of this dark, brooding professionalism, that "has emerged with scars" that Evans (2008) also talks about? The whole notion of a battle weary and bruised professionalism might denote that for some professionals, it hasn't been easy to rise to the new challenges of the changes in professional culture. Moreover, as the world has changed so too have the professions, thus professionals and their way of working have had to change with them.

One of the most obvious changes in the last 20 years is the role that information technology plays in our daily lives and increasingly continues to do so. The result of this technological transition means we have be-

come more intertwined with how we use technology to communicate ideas and do business with it. Coupled with these technological changes in our lives, the last few decades have bared witness to radical social and political changes that emerged with, first, the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, then following almost promptly after, the arrival of the global economy. These new market forces, and the whole legacy of a decadent decade of transatlantic neo-conservative power under the Reagan & Thatcher administration, profusely altered the political and economic landscape, transforming slow, antiquated bureaucratic models of publically owned (and controlled) industries into deregulated, privately owned, remodelled, restructured, rebranded and essentially competitive entities.

What resulted from the competitive era of the 1980's in the United Kingdom was a new approach to public services (based on US & Asian corporate business models), where the customer was 'always first' and everything revolved around getting curious buyers into some kind of contractual agreement to part with their money in the nicest possible terms. This new style of business meant a whole new occupational culture of managerialism and supervision, normally this was accompanied with restructuring (which became the business buzz word for job losses) or reorganising work procedures and schedules. With the use of new technologies and better telecommunications this meant those involved in delivering the services could take on a lot more work in the course of a day than ever before, with less people, less paperwork or more paperwork with less writing (with ready-made check lists, box ticking pro-formas, etc.,) or by delegating some tasks or part of the work to other departments or even merging departments to compress the workload with less staff. It was all designed to go faster, to create maximum productivity, keep customers happy, do battle with competitors, create more capital wealth for shareholders and when conditions were favourable expand operations overseas. This was certainly the case with the UK power and telecom industries and the city financial sector (which was shored up on the profits of the sale of public companies and the national infrastructure they were designed to manage). The reorganisation (or sale) of public assets within the UK infrastructure, denotes a significant change not only in the work ethics and professional culture, but it also signalled and ushered a dramatic paradigm shift that transformed traditional public sector services into commercial enterprises via the process of more aggressive forms of marketization.

However, despite this shift in market forces and the public sector being thrown into the competitive global market with better technology and the ever-increasing micro-managerialism in a constant search for more cost-efficient and faster delivery methods, professionals were starting to feel a kind of modern ennui. This can only be described as some kind of intense anxiety that all of a sudden, at any given moment they themselves would eventually be the next in line in the efficiency drive to be rendered redundant, outsourced or replaced by a computer, machine or a new, younger or even less expensive foreign professional. The traditional secure 'status and prestige' of the 20th century professional had been reduced, and simply redefined to 'cost and performance' by the start of the twenty-first century.

Like the industrial progress of the railroad in the 19th century, the 'knowledge economy' has radically altered our lives. The distance, time and speed of change is relegating and devaluing professional knowledge (more widely accessible) and, according to a recent article in the mainstream media, only those with "top level, highly skilled jobs will survive" (Morris, 2015), a scenario that is not only highly plausible, but given the nature of current technology increasingly inevitable.

Professionals in this early part of the 21st century have now more in common with the skilled workers of the late nineteenth century than they do with their 20th century counterparts; and, it might seem to be following a similar pathway (and possibly fate) that craftsmen and artisans suffered almost two centuries ago. Factory workers in the Victorian period also complained of being disempowered, undervalued, working longer and harder hours (Whitty, 2006) and moving progressively towards a process of alienation (Marx, 1884). The new era of professionalism mirrors a distinct similarity as new boundaries are drawn related to work flow variations and uncertainties, and bars and benchmarks are being raised (and lowered) in terms of access to

employment (increased academic inflation coupled with the 'dumbing down' of academic subjects). Professionals are finding themselves in pursuit of endless development courses and new certificates, occasionally this bears no resemblance or meaning to the job they do, but do, however, create an economy for trainers and the institutions that regulate professions (as a system of control). Failure to comply, pressure and demands, are also issues which lead to increasing dissatisfaction, detachment and disenfranchisement. Professionals it could be argued, that were once the 'captains' of industry, commerce, education and science, have been demoted to smaller cogs in the wheels of the societal apparatus, stripped of their status and power and are moving progressively further down the capitalist food chain as time progresses.

Teachers As Professionals

It goes without saying that teachers have been around for a long time, they've existed in every anthropological section of our planet's history, from humble parenting to the wider family unit, communities, tribes and nations. Today, they transcend borders and are becoming the new members of an increasingly internationalised workforce (Appleton, Morgan & Sives, 2006). Their contribution to, and influence on our individual lives and the wider achievements of the human project are inseparable. Teachers don't just teach, they condition our lives, share their knowledge, while offering us support and advice. They help us make sense of the things we don't quite fully understand by pointing us in the right direction, while reinforcing the things we do understand, encouraging us to learn more, and to consequently extend and expand our minds. In this respect, teachers should be valued by virtue of the merit of their efforts to fulfil these aims. Unfortunately, it doesn't always transpire to this state of understanding, and even in a time with an abundance of resources and technology at our finger tips, with better designed and smaller classes, many teachers on the frontline of education are leaving the profession.

In the UK, recent newspaper reports suggests that four out of ten newly qualified teachers leave the profession within the first year of their service (Weale, 2015; Morrison, 2015; Espinoza, 2015). Discussion blogs like Tom Bennett's (Bennett, 2013) in the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) are filled with experienced teachers feeling equally dissatisfied, burnt out and weary. This is not exclusive to the UK, as the United States and South Africa also claim, that they are also suffering a similar phenomenon (Niver, 2013; Seidel, 2014). Statistics from the *National Commission on Teaching and America's Future* show that "in urban districts, close to 50 percent of newcomers leave the profession during their first five years of teaching" (Niver, 2013). Some of the factors for what can only be described as a generational mass exodus from the profession show a strong correlation to government policy, workload and accountability. "A combination of unacceptable numbers of hours worked, a punitive accountability system, the introduction of performance-related pay and being expected to work until 68 for a pension has turned teaching into a less than attractive career choice," was quoted for UK teachers by Christine Blower, the General Secretary for the National Union of Teachers in the TES (Morrison; 2015).

Now, we could look at these figures and draw two basic conclusions. First, that some new teachers obviously felt that teaching just wasn't their vocation (after spending many years trying to qualify as a teacher at expense of public taxes). However, on the other hand, we could view their reluctance on an unfair system that exploits their labour, skills and attitudinal approach to the profession with excessive workloads and greater accountability, as declared by the teaching unions.

An interesting ideological consideration in the concept of teacher professionalism regarding these mass resignations, might be seen as a refusal to accept the current conditions, brought on by their whole sense of public duty to the profession, enthusiasm, ethics and values, along with a strong desire to maintain high standards and service. We would certainly consider all these attributes as 'professionalism', or at least a good sum part of it (which, we'd expect, as being the most important part for novice teachers).

This display of discontent could then be supported by Evans (2008) and from Boyt, Lusch and Naylor

(2001), stating that, "Professionalism consists of attitudes and behaviour one possesses toward one's profession. It is an attitudinal and behavioural orientation that individuals possess toward their occupations" (p. 322). In this sense, the refusal to accept the current conditions of the profession and the current professional culture that technically goes with it (such as, marking folders, or doing extra data entry beyond office hours), if we are to adopt this conceptual view of professionalism, would mean that these new teachers have acted with a display of professionalism, to uphold their autonomy as professionals, and demand a more balanced lifestyle with their work. Moreover, in their actions, perhaps they haven't let the profession, taxpayers or their communities down, but rather contrary to such beliefs touted in the media, it is the government and the profession that have failed them through a lack of support. What we might see from this display of discontent is a sense of protest through the value of professional identity and a commitment to the 'enacted' definition of professionalism and not the 'demanded' definition forced on them by the mechanism of the government`s current mandate on education, or, as Hilferty puts it, professionalism 'from above'(2008).

Furthermore, rather than rallying to investigate critical failures (and listen to the needs and concerns of teachers new and old) it would appear that neither the state institution nor the professional associations have the time to stop and contemplate these issues for any length of time. The kind of organic solidarity of interdependence that Durkheim (1893) envisioned in the 19th century is either eroding or is yet to manifest itself to its full potential in the battle of these injustices. Other issues including the sale and marketization of education (to the deregulation and franchise of new school academies and the rising number of private further education institutions), accompany societal variables such as the accumulation of personal debt through tuition and career loans, quite often to people now saddled with mortgages, or high rent leases in the absence of social housing (Barbour, 2014).

This new or current state of education as something to be bought comes with all the trappings of capitalist consumer materialism, which only serves to fuel a situation where professional colleagues now "bury their heads in the sand" (Evans, 2008; p. 17) trying to avoid confrontation, or don't have the time (understandably) and are stuck constantly within a culture of fear of losing their job. It might seem that self-preservation has become a normalised model in today's occupational culture; however, when one considers the implications for taking industrial action as a public school teacher, it is never welcomed by anyone, and teachers very rarely get the sympathy from the public, or the support they deserve in an effort to improve standards for themselves and ultimately education as a whole. This unfortunate state of affairs in the UK, under a very traditional Conservative ministerial top-down power and control system, also serves to undermine teacher professionalism by denying them a voice on how they feel the education system should be managed and, equally important, how it effects their place and role within it.

Professionalism as a conceptual construct

If professionalism is an ideological conceptual construct, how do we define it? Is it a state of mind, a manner, an attitude or an approach? Does it mean having a certain level of mastery of an acquired knowledge, or a natural born genetic skill? Is it having an occupational degree? Is it working on the job or having some kind of longevity of experience in a particular role? Is it a contract or some kind of service agreement? Meeting competency standards? Is it being able to adapt and diversify to different occupational cultures and conditions? Is it the set of values and ethics you carry with you? The answer to any one of these could match the criterion. Conceptions and interpretations vary and move constantly between the polarities of attitudinal and behavioural conduct, depending how professionalism (and the role of those engaged in it) is valued. One might argue that professionalism is more how you perform your duty and the way, the method, the style, fervour, the attitude and the timeframe estimated to do it, however, it could be anything from demonstrating complex ideas effectively to smiling and wearing a tie. Therefore, perhaps a more affirmative stance would be to see professionalism as encompassing all these behavioural things, as more a kind of philosophical ap-

proach to both the role and practice.

Therefore, if professionalism is more an attitudinal than a behavioural construct, based on acquired or learned skill competencies, current knowledge and good values such as pride in the job and customer service, how does one reach this state of occupational enlightenment? Traditionally, learning to balance all the factors that required one to develop professionally, was mostly founded and built on actual experience (support of an older peer, mentor or association; an apprenticeship within a professional culture that afforded members a great deal of time and space; shadowing other professionals, finding their role models, then developing their own autonomy, craft, style and fervour for the function). In this sense, one's own career is not instantly professionalised, but it is more like a journey to the earned status of a professional, as some sort of constant life-long learning process of continued professional development (CPD), because the true nature of any profession will change and evolve as will the role of the professionals, the mode of the function they practice (as we have seen, with the transformation of technology in our lives).

Professionalism is therefore a dynamic and transformative process that both the profession and professionals undergo when conditions permit, as shown in practice and theory. Which of these entities is master and which is subservient to whom or what, is irrelevant; only through a process of time invested in learning (mimicking, trial and error, etc.) and through ongoing experience, can we really find our true professional wings, as invariably professions shape professionals. But, professions don't and can't change of their own accord; this could be anything from a change in policy or technology that becomes a normalised daily practice or a one off event that requires decisive action.

Professionalism in this sense is basically implementing and adapting to change or updating and improving skills, hence why it is the responsibility of the professional to seek and find ways of developing further to have more control over their craft (while maintaining autonomy in the process). This means that professionalism is an ideology that entices members to 'strive' to become professionals, then continue to be even better professionals, to do the best they can at all times and therefore it is a never ending race to cover more ground. Professionalism is a life-long learning endeavour and can never really be truly complete, and every day on the job is another opportunity to try and make it better and extend it as far as one can, based on common sense and rational judgement. There are certainly many aspects of it which can be mastered, like software or presentation skills and knowing when to step back, listen and so on. This leaves free time and energy to focus more on extending to those areas which might be more complex and problematic (like mentoring and counselling for example, which require a deeper sensitivity). There will always be new challenges in the maintenance of professionalism in any profession and ultimately in most cases one size does not fit all, and that is why we call on professionals and trust them to use their judgement and knowledge with our core interests at their heart.

Measuring and Evaluating Professionalism

As already indicated, professionalism is an elusive concept, it has challenged some of the best sociological minds throughout modernity from Auguste Comte, to Max Weber, Herbert Spencer to Talcott Parsons. When we consider the complexity of the term, the voluminous literature it has produced, and how it has challenged experts for a considerable amount of time given its abstract position, one equally difficult question has to be, can it be measured? (Rutter & Duncan 2010). If so, what methods or instrument would be effective? Who is suitable to measure or evaluate professionalism? What should this measurement be used for?

The notion that professionalism can be measured and weighed has long since been accepted and faithfully practised in various professional service sectors to monitor and evaluate levels of quality standards and above all public satisfaction. Methods normally include some kind of observational study of certain factors within the live practice or a controlled simulation. This monitoring is normally conducted by peers or a higher professional body or institute. One of the most common means of gathering this data is through the use of a sur-

vey, normally centred on the practice of the function, for example a collection of data from patients, clients or students. This data is gathered to help the professionals get a better understanding of how their work is perceived and help them identify problems and foster changes in the interest of improvement (i. e. that good practice is the centre of good professionalism).

In the United States, this survey method, normally through the instrument of a questionnaire, has been used in higher education to measure the professional standards and practices of instructors as far back as the 1920's (Remmers & Brandenburg, 1927, as cited in Kulik, 2001), however, it has not been until the last three decades that this method has increasingly become standard practice throughout the US. Student evaluations of teaching, or SETs as they are known, were originally used to monitor and measure teaching performance, and as has already been highlighted, this could be generally understood to incorporate both Freidson's (2001) `old school' and Evan's (2008) 'substance' of the redefinition of the new professionalism. Either way, old or new ideological concepts, a lot of weight to the construction of SETs is logically connected to the judgement of skills, knowledge, ethics and values that help define teachers and the standard of the work they produce or undertake.

Not many people would dispute that gathering multidimensional, psychometric data on some part of a teacher's professionalism (organisation, enthusiasm, breadth of coverage etc,) and their ability to transfer knowledge to those who have spent the most time in the classroom, and participated in the learning process with them is not in some way a good idea. Although there are a number of other ways of factor analysis towards teaching, such as external observers auditing live or through video-taped lectures, that focuses on a precise range of teaching behaviours (Murray, 1983), (and these have been studied extensively since the 1980's), they are however difficult to implement and organise. Perhaps the reason why SETs have become such common place and have witnessed such international growth as a dominant force in the measure of teacher effectiveness over the last two decades (Feldman, 1979) can be assumed that they are relatively easy to implement (Marsh & Roche, 1997). Students are after all the most valuable part of the teacher's labour and a very cost effective method for gathering data, since institutions don't have to hire trained observers (who only see maybe one or two classes), or use addition equipment and resources. The emphasis is not so much on the quality of the observation, but the quantity and frequency of it. In addition, any attempt to understand their views, interpretations of the practice or any advice they have on parts or the whole learning experience for both mutual parties and stakeholders makes SETs a logical, valuable and purposeful endeavour.

In spite of this logistical solution and the wealth of literature to support the usefulness of SETs as an effective means for measuring teacher behaviour and learning, most notably from Marsh & Roche, 1997; Cohen, 1981; McKeachie, 1990; Ramsden, 1991, and a host of others who have made it an enterprise in selling them to institutions with complete faith, there is equally a lot of opposition to them (Koblitz, 1990; Rutland, 1990; Zoller, 1992) not only with scepticism, but even hostility. According to Heller, there was even some heated resistance to them being introduced in a university mathematics department "who refused to take part in a SETs evaluation programme" (cited in Wachtel, 1998, p. 193). The main battleground for contention centres on issues around 'validity'. For those who support multidimensional SETs as a valid relationship between teaching and learning, it is simply a question of the methodological approach. For Marsh & Roche (1997), it includes getting the right nine factors and breadth of coverage of sample for the "Students' Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ) instrument" (p. 1187). They highlight these factors as, "Learning/Value; Instructor Enthusiasm; Individual Rapport; Breadth of coverage; Examinations/Grading, Assignment/Readings and Workload/Difficulty". While it could be said, that many of these factors cover philosophical ideals of professionalism, scepticism exists around not the validity of the factors per se, or the market values of 'customer service', but the validity of instrument and external variables that affect exact definitive results. Professionalism, in its abstract and subjective form is therefore contentious, never absolute, constantly evolving from the constructs and nature of social reality. Moreover, what professionalism constitutes via each single component

and variable within it is incredibly complex and unpredictable, and herein lays the real dilemma of quantification of such complexity through SETs.

The lack of faith and suspicion, that surround SETs are not a narrow-minded attempt to deny students a 'voice' in the learning process and the fine-tuning of an instructor`s pedagogical 'art and craft' in the lecture hall (Ornstein, 1990), this would be perhaps contrary to the ideals of most teachers. The subjective nature of even teaching effectiveness is not really conclusive (Spencer, 1992), like professionalism itself, it can never be truly defined, because it means different things to different people. The issue underlying the debate around SETs is not solely on learning, but how that measure is a direct result of teaching behaviours, as Cohen (1981), an adamant supporter of SETs, admits when considering the variables of teaching effectiveness and what students learn, that "a number of factors outside the teacher's control (student ability and motivation, for example) affects the amount the students learn" (p. 281).

These 'factors' which Cohen brings to our attention are underscored in extensive discussions, some of which are considered and summarised by Wachtel (1998) as a wide range of areas and issues that could in some way influence and determine the results of SETs, foregoing the subjectivity of the content, such as the 'timing' (Feldman, 1979), method of distribution including 'instructor presence', the kind of course (whether these are mandatory or electives, subject area, undergrad/graduate), class size (Scott, 1977), workload (Ryan, 1980) and so on. Recent returns to the literature on SETs (Barre, 2015b) now suggest that gender which wasn't previously regarded as a bias, now shows some indications that women rate women higher and that male students rate male teachers higher. And while there appears to have been simply not enough studies and investment into the examination of ethnic minorities (Rubin, 1995), I would be reluctant to believe that racial bias is not a factor in the production of SETs. Other factors relating to the instructor, such as 'rank, reputation and experience', 'research productivity' (Centra, 1977; Feldman, 1987; Marsh, 1979), along with 'personality' (Feldman, 1986) and 'physical attractiveness' (Buck and Tiene, 1989) all comprise significant indicators. Wachtel (1998) also goes on to discuss the correlation and depth of research into external variables governing the "characteristics of the students" (p. 201) themselves, such as social background, age, gender, subject interest, prior knowledge, academic record, emotional state, expectation and so on. Within the "characteristics of students", there is an abundance of research on the subject of 'grades', the expectation of them on the part of students and the leniency and distribution of them by instructor. The hypothesis regarding this 'phenomenon' is that if instructors appear (or are known to students through previous published SETs) to be more lenient, then the expectations of the students are higher, which prompts them to support the instructor positively (Koshland, 1991).

This is a particularly controversial area because some claim it is not only connected to 'grade inflation' (Johnson, 2006), but is also 'lowering the bar' and the standards of higher education (Reynolds, 2014) which potentially devalues it. The competitive convention of the private higher education sector in the United States, is where most of the research of SETs is centred, although the use (and study) of SETs continue to grow internationally. The absence of state funding of students creates a climate where students must either attain and maintain a scholarship or take out expensive bank loans to cover the cost of their education. The result of this measure means that 'grades' are generally particularly important. They create not only a kind of financial relief but act as a kind of status symbol that is advantageous for future employment.

Another particularly worrying trend in the US is the replacement (or non replacement) of full-time experienced tenured professors with adjunct instructors (Minniti, 2015). The long established tradition of a permanent position within an institution could be gradually coming to an end. The implications this has for instructors and the way SETs are being used as valid and determining factors in administration and faculty decisions to award, tenure, performance related pay rises, promotion and bonuses or even dismissal, is yet another disappointing result for professionals in the education system, which renders the 'prestige, status and esteem' that Hoyle (1982) indicates were historically associated with professionals pretty much obsolete. The present

day, devaluation or side-lining of professional knowledge and skills, is somewhat akin to and draws parallels with the 19th century notion of Marx's theory of alienation, this of course echo's Evan's (2010) claim that professionalism (certainly for entry level university professors) is "not what it used to be" (P. 1).

Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined and discussed the abstract and often subjective ideology of professionalism. In that attempt, I approached the definition from both a historical and contemporary view in a bid to further understand the essence and construct of the term to locate and attach meaning to it. Through this examination, I sought to position professionalism as both attitudinal and behavioural within the context of social class, long with the role and function within the wider society, transcending from public service to the free market economy of the private sector. This influenced change, not so much in the ideology of professionalism or the function of it, but altered the occupational culture within it. From this discourse, it is evident that professionalism in the post-modern sense is facing a dilemma. The underlying factors that are controlling and conditioning the current state of professionalism are embedded within continuing global market forces, which are having an adverse effect on the demand for human capital. This could be attributed to market expansion from the developing world, technology and economic disparity forcefully and radically altering the landscape not only for traditional or modern professions, but indeed the entire occupational culture in a much wider global context.

What this means for teachers, I would argue, is a need not only for a deeper engagement with societal issues, but a closer attention to the micro, meso and macro forces that preside over them and ultimately their place within them. There is a dire need to simply take a step back and look at the bigger picture of what is happening today in the profession. To use the analogy of an engineer, to see the apparatus in its entirety "the cracks and strains," and evaluate the full extent of the damage in order to get a better extent of what needs replacing and what needs repairing. This includes the immediate problem of new and established teachers leaving the profession and a deeper examination of how deregulation and privatisation along with micro-managerialism are forcing and creating such rifts. The constant scrutiny, of the work teachers do (either through SETs or Government mandates) are not improving the system or the quality of education, but appears to be removing autonomy from those at the chalk-face and dictating a new mechanised paradigm. This is not only hurting the trust of the profession but effectively undermines and devalues it too. These problems ultimately resonate beyond the institution to the wider society. Teachers are not essentially or even generally competitive or capitally driven creatures by nature, conditions today seem to indicate they are been exploited by those more familiar with running corporate industries based on profit and not places of learning based on the acquisition of knowledge and personal growth.

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