

**Social trajectories or disrupted identities? Changing  
and competing models of teacher professionalism  
under New Labour**

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## **Abstract**

*Since the 1988 Education Reform Act, the teacher's role in England has changed in many ways, a process which intensified under New Labour after 1997. Conceptions of teacher professionalism have become more structured and formalized, often heavily influenced by government policy objectives. Career paths have become more diverse and specialised. In this article, three post-1997 professional roles are given consideration as examples of these new specialised career paths: Higher Level Teaching Assistants, Teach First trainees and Advanced Skills Teachers. The article goes on to examine such developments within teaching, using Bourdieu's concept of habitus to inform the analysis, as well as Bernstein's theories of knowledge and identity. The article concludes that there has been considerable specialization and subsequent fragmentation of roles within the teaching profession, as part of workforce remodelling initiatives. However, there is still further scope for developing a greater sense of professional cohesion through social activism initiatives, such as the children's agenda. This may produce more stable professional identities in the future as the role of teachers within the wider children's workforce is clarified.*

## **Introduction**

Since the advent of New Labour in 1997, England has seen many changes in the nature of teacher professionalism. Many of the more recent changes were anticipated in the White Paper *Schools – Achieving Success* (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2001), which outlined a package of reforms targeted at secondary education. That paper presaged the 2002 Education Act, in which the main focus of the government was to raise educational standards in all schools and other educational settings, for children and young people between the ages of 0 and 18. This was linked to a number of major government initiatives, such as Every Child Matters (2002), the Raising Standards and Tackling Workload national agreement (2003), and the Training and Development Agency for Schools' revised Professional Standards for Teachers (2009). This rapidly changing policy landscape has had an effect on the way teacher professionalism is conceptualized and generally understood, and three examples of how these changes have been played out in practice are examined in this article.

The intellectual framework of our analysis warrants brief explanation. We have considered the utility of particular concepts derived from social theory, and use Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* as a tool for enhancing our understanding of changing conceptions of teacher professionalism. These conceptions can be influenced by different government agencies, as well as by the profession itself, and often come about in response to current government initiatives. Later in the article, we also refer to Bernstein's theories of knowledge and identity. We examine changes in social and political structures over time to determine whether and to what degree professional identities are congruent or dissonant with specific policy aims or broader agendas.

Overall, the article offers an analysis of changing constructions of teacher professionalism in relation to current policy. While it is not based on empirical field research, throughout the article we draw upon our knowledge of policy developments relating to three discrete post-1997 roles in teaching as a means of highlighting key points; these roles are those of Higher Level Teaching Assistants, Teach First trainees and Advanced Skills Teachers. This approach allows us to consider the context of habitus as well as theoretical issues, what Reay (2004) might describe as putting the concept to work in different settings.

### **Bourdieu and the concept of habitus**

As mentioned above, we have elected to employ the concept of habitus, as defined by Bourdieu (Bourdieu; 1977, 1992)<sup>1</sup>. Habitus is a key concept in Bourdieu's own set of intellectual tools or, as he described them, 'thinking tools', for analyzing the social world. The use of habitus as a term can be somewhat problematic, as it has become so extended and diversely applied. However, it can be defined here and for our purposes as the specialization of consciousness peculiar to a particular field. Habitus represents the idea that we all have dispositions to act and our actions are regulated by a set of durable and generative principles. In the words of Nash:

*Habitus is conceived as a generative schema in which the forms of elemental social structures come, through the process of socialization, to be embodied in*

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed account of its origins and uses, as well as its relationship to educational research, is beyond the scope of this article. However, such an account can be found in Nash (1999), which also explains some of the limitations of the term, and locates it in relation to a wider range of social theories.

*individuals, with the result that people necessarily act in such a way that the underlying structures are reproduced and given effect. (Nash, ibid: 177)*

Thus if we are to apply this to the question of changes in internalised conceptions of teacher professionalism, it is necessary to consider how the social and professional identity of teachers is constructed and replicated during the course of their everyday occupational lives. This allows us to judge how unified professional identity is in teaching, or whether there is in fact a contemporary ‘rupture’ in teacher identity, leading to fragmentation of teachers’ roles. As a contribution to this analysis, later in the article we offer the three specific examples of contemporary teacher roles mentioned above (Higher Level Teaching Assistants; Teach First trainees and Advanced Skills Teachers), and pose the following questions. Is New Labour’s redefinition of teacher identity a *consequence* of a developing habitus amongst teachers? Or is it based on the presumption that habitus is something that can be instantly created or remoulded at will by government? Beck (2008) writes in relation to New Labour’s apparent coercion of teachers into these new models of professionalism and related accountability issues:

*Essentially, then, this is a project of both discursive and institutional appropriation – a systematic effort by government and its agencies to marginalise competing models of professional organisation and the conceptions of professionalism they might promote and protect”. (Beck, 2008, p133)*

In what follows, we explore whether this is reflected in the emergence of the three new roles and how far it is likely to be successful.

## **Theoretical issues and challenges**

The first challenge in analyzing teacher professionalism in these terms is to establish the genesis of any particular habitus common to teachers. Reay (*op.cit.*) admits the concept of habitus is contested, and sometimes considered problematic, but argues that Bourdieu conceives habitus at the individual as well as the collective level. It can also vary (within limits) according to individual differences. As Bourdieu writes:

*Just as no two individual histories are identical so no two individual habituses are identical.* (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 46, cited in Reay, *op cit*: 434).

Therefore a collective habitus can be seen to contain a range of individual habituses. Teaching could consequently be considered in one of two ways. It could either be a generic habitus separate from its roles or, alternatively, it could come in various forms, and each of its diverse roles could embody what it means to be a teacher. On the surface these statements sound broadly similar. However, there is an important difference embedded within them. The former suggests that there is a sole pre-existing disposition that defines teacher identity. The latter suggests that there are multiple dispositions and that consequently there is the possibility of multiple teacher identities existing within the same profession or, in more extreme cases, within the same professional<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> There are also issues involved in determining whether the concept of a 'career' in teaching is the same as a teaching habitus, for example, or whether 'career' is too self-serving and individualized a concept to be recognized as such, as we discuss later.

A second problem is the existence of ongoing variations in teachers' identity. The phenomenon of changing identity is well documented in research such as the VITAE project (Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and their Effects on Pupils), for example. In that study, Day *et al* (2006) note the complexity and instability inherent in teachers' personal and professional lives, whilst classifying teachers into four overarching groups according to whether they are thought to have a positive or negative identity, and whether this is thought to be stable or unstable. This kind of analysis is valuable in helping us to understand teachers' journeys through the professional life course, but it focuses on the shifting nature of socially situated identity, rather than the durable disposition underpinning it. Therefore, it is still valid to carry out an investigation into the role of habitus in teacher professionalism, as this gives additional insights into individual versus collective aspects of contemporary teaching. Additionally, there is scope to examine whether it is possible for habitus itself to be transformed, as well as exploring the impact of institutions themselves on habitus.

In seeking to develop reductive typologies of professionalism based on the everyday life of teachers, such as the 'compliant technician' (Sachs, 2001: 7), assumptions are frequently made about what it means to be a teacher, lumping them together in what social anthropologists would describe as the Collective Individual or the Collective Professional (Stronach *et al*, 2002). Furthermore, the marketisation of education that has taken place since the 1988 Education Reform Act has, amongst other things, had

the effect of greatly increasing the range and scope of teacher roles available, as schools seek to develop unique characteristics that distinguish them in market terms.

A final problem in defining contemporary teacher professionalism, which we introduced earlier, is the existence of power asymmetry between the state and teachers, such as the recent introduction of Professional Standards for Teachers by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). Teachers' compliance in relation to government policy of this kind has increasingly been regarded by governments as a mark of their professionalism, with co-operation being rewarded by social positioning as a 'prospective citizen', who is viewed as being contemporary and ahead of time, rather than a 'retrospective citizen' who is viewed as being out of touch and behind time (Bernstein, 2000; Leaton Gray, 2006). Whitty sees this as indicative of a form of segmentation within the teaching profession that may already have been emerging over a number of years. He argues that one understanding of the present policy position could be that some members of the profession are being prepared for leadership roles within the new marketised culture of schooling, whereas others may be limited to a more restricted model of professionalism (Whitty, 2002). This all suggests fundamental changes in the nature of teacher professionalism. Some teachers will navigate these changes more successfully or more pragmatically than others, depending on their individual identities and dispositions at any given time. The question is whether these changes represent a transient shift in identity, along the lines of the findings of the VITAE project, or whether they represent a more deep seated shift in habitus.

### **Changes in teacher career trajectories**



Before the advent of the New Labour government in 1997, structures and hierarchies within the teaching profession had remained largely unchanged since the 1988 Education Reform Act. Amongst other things, the 2002 Education Act challenged this by introducing the following key policies:

- It prioritized the raising of standards in schooling and allowed greater autonomy for schools that were doing well.
- It allowed schools to opt out of national agreements in relation to teachers' pay and conditions.
- It outlined plans for school workforce remodelling.
- It allowed schools to use adults without qualified teacher status (QTS) for certain teaching duties.

Consequently these changes resulted in a greatly increased number of possible roles for teachers, as schools were permitted to become more flexible in their employment practices, particularly if they were perceived to be doing well. Additionally, roles have increasingly been tailored to meet government policy objectives, such as the school improvement agenda (TeacherNet, 2007; Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1998a and b). At the time of writing, the school workforce in England can be categorised as follows in table 1.

**TABLE 1 HERE**

Three of these new roles are the focus of the remainder of this article: Higher Level Teaching Assistants, Teach First trainees, and Advanced Skills Teachers. Although the total number of teachers involved in these roles is small relative to the overall workforce<sup>3</sup>, these categories are important because they represent fundamental shifts in three important and interrelated aspects of teacher professionalism: autonomy, knowledge and responsibility respectively. Changes in the nature of these aspects of professionalism can alter the nature of teacher professionalism itself (Furlong *et al*, 2000).

### ***Higher Level Teaching Assistants – the question of teacher autonomy***

An interesting characteristic of the post-1997 categories in the table above is that they are linked explicitly to government education policies. The Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) category is a good example of this, as it raises particular questions about differing levels of autonomy within the school workforce.

The use of paraprofessionals in education allows the government both to develop the lowest tier of the education workforce, and to reduce teacher workload at relatively low cost. This tier of the workforce can be seen as having a generic disposition towards working with children and young people in schools whilst guided by more senior colleagues. This disposition may originally have come about as a consequence of their own parenting experiences or prior volunteer work in education. This type of

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<sup>3</sup> Figures for 2006-7 (Source: Department for Education and Skills (2007) *School Workforce in England (including pupil: teacher ratios and pupil: adult ratios), January 2007 (Revised)*)

Total number of teachers in England = 439,000 (full time equivalent)

Total number of Advanced Skills Teachers = 4,060

Total number of Learning Support Assistants, including Higher Level Teaching Assistants = 163,000

Total number of Teach First participants = 250 (out of 31,300 Initial Teacher Training places)

work can be seen as a lifestyle choice for many, as hours and responsibilities are more limited than for teachers, which makes such roles particularly attractive to parents of school-aged children. Therefore, we see the personal and the work identities closely intertwined.

HLTAs represent those who have been encouraged to professionalise their existing supporting roles through further study and qualifications, developing a more formal school and policy-focused habitus over time. In the words of one HLTA:

*I was aware of the changing role of TAs, and knew that being a mum wasn't sufficient experience for this role. So in September 2001 I enrolled on a BTEC Teaching Assistants course Level 3. (HLTA East, 2008)*

In terms of how HLTAs fit into schools, the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group has made it clear that the use of HLTAs is recommended as a means of creating sufficient non-contact time for teachers to carry out their Planning, Preparation and Assessment activities (known as PPA time). This is considered to be different from covering classes for absent teachers, in that HLTAs are considered able to supervise classes in the teacher's absence during PPA time by delivering a pre-prepared learning programme, whereas covering classes does not necessarily involve additional learning on the part of the pupils (TDA, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). The TDA is careful to make this distinction.

*The need for cover arises when a teacher is absent from a lesson they are timetabled to teach. PPA time is time during which a teacher is not timetabled*

*to teach. Schools are therefore required to put additional staffing into their timetables in order to ensure that delivery of the curriculum is maintained.*

(TDA, 2005: 2)

Yet despite being considered able to ‘deliver’ learning in such circumstances, and clearly having some autonomy in terms of curriculum delivery techniques on account of the physical absence of the classroom teacher, HLTAs are not classified as teachers, and they are not meant to replace teachers (TDA, 2007a). However, an indication of the gradual blurring of professional boundaries can be seen in reports of HLTAs standing in for teachers with QTS and taking over teaching duties, during maternity leave, for example, even though this is not permitted by the HLTA regulations (BBC, 2007; Hutchings *et al.*, 2009). In many respects, this seems like teaching, but not as we know it. As Wilkinson states:

*One finds oneself wanting to ask what precisely ‘teaching’ means. Is teaching the delivery of lessons through interaction with pupils in the classroom or does it boil down to authoring ‘learning outcomes’ for others to deliver?*

(Wilkinson, 2005: 429)

If HLTAs are indeed starting effectively to teach pupils in their own right in some (albeit limited) circumstances, it could be an example of professional knowledge ceasing to be sacred and becoming profane (Bernstein, *op. cit.*; Beck; 2002; Beck and Young, 2005) because it is now considered possible for non-teachers to acquire the knowledge necessary to teach pupils. An arrangement of this type implies that pedagogical or curricular knowledge does not require an inner commitment on the

part of the knower, created over time (Bernstein, *op. cit.*), but is instead something that can simply be delivered by interchangeable substitutes, as it has been codified. As Bernstein wrote:

*Knowledge, after nearly a thousand years, is divorced from inwardness and literally dehumanized. Once knowledge is separated from commitments, from personal dedication, and from the deep structure of the self, then people may be moved about, substituted for each other and excluded from the market.*

(Bernstein, *op. cit.*: 86)

This suggests a shift from teachers having ownership of a particular aspect of their professional mandate (in this case directing and enabling pupils' learning activities) to sharing or delegating ownership of that mandate. It is an example of what Wilkinson describes as an 'erosion of professional jurisdiction' (Wilkinson, *op. cit.*). It therefore clearly represents a more fundamental shift than a simple change in socially situated identity as a consequence of different employment practices, in this case workload management. In terms of habitus, it is clear that this construction of professionalism can no longer be seen as something confined to an elite group, nor can it be seen as something high status or sacred. Instead, in many ways it appears to be institutionally bound; knowledge-led rather than knower-led.

### ***Teach First – the question of teacher knowledge***

Teach First is another example of change, in this case in relation to the acquisition of professional knowledge. Based on Teach for America in the United States, it originated when management consultants McKinsey and Company recommended a

programme to encourage top graduates to teach in maintained schools for a limited period of two years in the first instance, before going on to other careers, although it is possible for graduates to stay on longer if they wish. At the end of the first year they are awarded QTS. The Teach First website reports that the scheme was developed as a consequence of their findings that “excellent teachers can increase the percentage of pupils who gain 5+ A\*-C GCSEs by 40% over what would normally be expected” (McKinsey and Company, 2002).

Although it is clear that the scheme entices a limited number of very intelligent and academically high attaining graduates into a profession that they might not otherwise have considered, the example of Teach First also demonstrates a shift in the nature of teacher professionalism. While it maintains the expectation that teaching will be a graduate entry profession, arguably this development downplays the importance of specialist professional preparation. In the case of Teach First, this element of training has been greatly modified. Graduate participants are given a short introduction to teaching, and some ongoing professional development and mentoring in leadership by the business community. Within their training, limited time is given to professional studies and virtually none to what used to be known as education studies, such as the sociology, psychology, history and philosophy of education. Instead, there is greater emphasis on generic management and leadership skills (Teach First, 2009). Therefore, we see a similar position to that of HLTAs, in that specialist professional knowledge has become profane, not requiring an enduring inner commitment to membership of the teaching profession. This is what Beck has described as an ‘inner emptiness’ (Beck; *op. cit.*).

The move away from the inclusion of educational studies, and even significant aspects of professional studies, in training courses for Teach First teachers is unsurprising in the light of general changes in teacher education since the 1980s. During this time, the academic study of education has become increasingly marginalized even in the more conventional Postgraduate Certificate in Education courses now provided by partnerships between university departments of education and local schools (Furlong *et al*, *op.cit.*). However, Teach First represents an extreme example, with the pre-service element being compressed into four weeks of summer school, divided between Professional Studies (2 weeks) and Subject Studies (2 weeks).

In order to be selected, participants are required to demonstrate something that Nias would probably classify as ‘commitment as career continuance’ (Nias, 1981), a largely self-interested model of teacher behaviour<sup>4</sup>. Hence in the recruitment materials, early responsibility and leadership training are emphasized (Teach First, *op. cit.*). This suggests that recruiters expect participants to sign up on the basis of enhanced career advancement opportunities in a range of professions and industries after two years in the classroom. In this model, it seems as though participants appear more as *consumers* of training, rather than fledgling professionals. This indicates another shift, away from a long term or lifelong relationship with teaching, towards teaching as a temporary lifestyle choice. Being an “excellent teacher” is seen as a training ground, or something that can be done for a short period of time as a new graduate on the way to taking a high level administrative post outside the profession.

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<sup>4</sup> An alternative way of understanding Teach First is to see it as a modern version of the university settlements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which involved Oxbridge graduates giving service to deprived urban communities in the years immediately following their graduation. This implies a degree of vocation, albeit of a short-term ‘missionary’ variety. See Pimlott (1935).

In this sense, the personal arena and the work arena are separate, unlike many alternative models of professionalism, where teachers develop a professional identity more organically and over a longer period of time (see Nias, 1989). Teach First is explicitly designed to promote a reflexive disposition towards developing a generic graduate career, rather than developing a particular habitus as a teacher. In doing so, any professional habitus becomes portable, rather than institutionally bound, as in the case of the HLTA. Interestingly its portability extends well beyond the profession of origin to become something more individually self-serving, as opposed to feeding into a specific professional community.

Such an approach to teaching could be regarded in a number of ways. In one sense, the programme has its roots in the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP), which is a well established form of on-the-job training that allows teachers to study, and eventually qualify, while they work as a teacher (TDA, 2007d). Another view is that this could be seen as representing a moral outsourcing of professionalism, where knowledge of the curriculum and knowledge of the child are no longer central, but instead have been replaced with what Giddens (1991) would term a 'disembedded expert system', a pragmatic system of professional practice, based on lists of competencies developed by the TDA, which are not grounded in local, experiential knowledge achieved over time. Thus the expert system has largely replaced the expert practitioner.

Such a lack of experiential knowledge may present challenges for some Teach First trainees. A recent Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) report into the scheme, whilst being positive in tone overall, stated that around half the trainees would have



benefited from more sustained and focused training in the area of managing pupil behaviour, for example (Ofsted, 2008: 11).

The total number of teachers trained using this route remains relatively small - official Department for Education and Skills (DfES) figures stated 160 participants in 2003/4, 180 participants in 2004/5, 220 participants in 2005/6 and 250 participants in 2006/7 (DfES, 2006). This constitutes 0.8% of all Initial Teacher Training places. However, the implications of changing professional training in this way are more significant. It may be useful to think of it as the education equivalent of large pharmaceutical companies deciding how to attract more high achieving graduates to nursing, for example. In doing so, they might help to design and partly sponsor courses in conjunction with the National Health Service (NHS), offering financial inducements as well as internships at pharmaceutical companies during their vacations, with a view to recruiting them as managers outside nursing at some point in the future.

Ball has argued that this type of private sector intervention in education is largely undemocratic, involving resources being exchanged, interests being served and rewards being achieved. It represents a blurring of public and private domains in relation to education policy, and that as a consequence of this blurring, it is hard to track the basis on which decisions are made. Therefore, policy has become more opaque, and 'incoherently coherent' (Ball, 2007). This has not necessarily been the case with Teach First, as it was supported by the DfES, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) (precursor to the TDA) and the Secondary Heads Association (1998), which suggests that there has been significant public sector input. However, it still raises important questions about the balance of contributions of different stakeholders to

teacher recruitment and retention, as well as their legitimacy in determining what should constitute professional knowledge. If trainees are receiving more training in business leadership skills than classroom management, for example, this may not be in the immediate interests of their pupils, as suggested by the Ofsted report mentioned previously (Ofsted, *op. cit.*)

In addition, the brief duration of participants' involvement in the programme suggests that there is some risk to other emerging types of professionalism, such as collaborative and democratic professionalisms (Whitty, 2008), which emphasize professional collaboration. While over half of the Teach First participants do remain in the classroom after the initial two year period, the remainder go elsewhere<sup>5</sup>. This transience may have an effect on the ability of existing teachers to build relationships and to collaborate effectively with their Teach First colleagues in a sustainable manner. For example, one early newspaper article reported established teachers showing sporadic resentment towards Teach First colleagues (Wilce, 2004), though such antagonism is now much less evident.

In the light of all this, one way of positioning Teach First as a social organization could be to regard it as an example of *Gesellschaft*, a kind of self-interested civil association, rather than *Gemeinschaft*, a community of professionals regulated by a set of common aims and understandings (Tönnies, 2001). The dichotomy illustrates conflicting conceptualizations of professionalism, and possibly another shift in *habitus*: teachers sufficiently interested in education to work towards QTS, but sufficiently disinterested to look outside education for a long-term career. In other

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<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, many of these maintain an involvement with education in their roles, which could actually enhance the potential for collaborative and democratic professionalisms.

words, for some Teach First trainees, the social location of their work habitus can lie outside teaching altogether. If time and the life course are added as additional factors (in this case the relative youth of participants and their early career stages), the argument in support of an apparent shift in habitus looks even clearer. Bourdieu states that habitus gives disproportional weight to early experience (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). What we are therefore seeing in terms of Teach First trainees is probably not so much a teaching habitus, but rather a contemporary reflexive work or career habitus, of which teaching is one part.

### *Advanced Skills Teachers – the question of teacher responsibility*

Coming to the last of the three new roles under scrutiny, Advanced Skills Teachers offer an example of how the nature of leadership and responsibility has changed in teaching. They were first proposed in England by the Department for Education and Employment under the right wing Conservative party, and the role was subsequently referred to in the 1997 left wing Labour party Manifesto, as a way of ‘recognizing the best’ (Labour Party, 1997: 9). The scheme originated in Australia and the United States, and was seen as a method of encouraging good teachers to remain in the classroom, as opposed to applying for deputy headship posts. In this respect it represented a fundamental shift in career structure for senior teachers. It allowed them to turn away from the existing promotion path, which involved increasing levels of management responsibility. Instead, they could choose an alternative route to promotion, based more closely on their day-to-day teaching activities, achieving higher levels of reward in return for acquiring excellent classroom skills, and responsibility within their school for subject-related teaching and learning activities

instead. The ultimate aim of this could be seen as improving the standard of subject teaching within schools.

In policy terms, the introduction of Advanced Skills Teachers related to other New Labour initiatives such as school development planning, the reform of teacher training, and performance related pay (Sutton *et al*, 2000). The government originally set a target of 10,000 Advanced Skills Teachers (*ibid.*), but funding was limited, and current figures show that only 4,060 had been recruited by the academic year 2006/7 (DfES, 2007). Consequently, a recent article in the *Times Educational Supplement* suggested that the grade may not now offer sufficient career advancement opportunities for many teachers (Howson, 2007).

On the surface, the motivation behind establishing this classroom based leadership role appears to be sound. However, the introduction of Advanced Skills Teachers raises important questions about wider issues of professional responsibility and compliance amongst senior teachers. The TTA adopted a very technical mindset when originally conceptualising the role (Graham, 1997), as a result of its decision to develop a competency based approach aimed at assessing teachers on an individual basis. This approach had been heavily criticized in Australia, on the grounds that it appeared to subjugate or even silence some valid forms of educational interaction with pupils, such as collaborative working, whilst privileging others that corresponded more closely to current government policy, such as individualistic practices (Smyth and Shacklock, 1998). In terms of the TTA's assessment framework, this requirement for compliance seems to indicate a significant degree of domination of government over professionals, and points to the very model of policy friendly extended

professionalism Whitty articulates (Whitty, 2002). A further problem with the use of a competency based approach is that teachers perceived it as being divisive, on the grounds that it failed to take into account the collaborative and co-operative nature of professional life in contemporary schools (*ibid.*, Blake *et al*, 2000a and b).

Assessment criteria for appointment were not the sole concern. There had been other criticisms in both Australia and the United States in relation to many aspects of the Advanced Skills Teacher role (Watkins, 1994), but they were not taken into account when launching the scheme in England (Ingvarson and Chadbourne, 1997). The first of these criticisms was that governments were trying to make the scheme achieve too many objectives at once. This was certainly the case during its implementation in England. Even at the earliest stages of development, it was possible to see different policies operating concurrently. For example, it was initially thought that Advanced Skills Teachers would play a key role in raising attainment in Education Action Zones (EAZs) - areas of social deprivation. EAZs seemed to combine elements of the government's standards and inclusion agendas (DfEE, 1998a and b; DfES, 2001; DfES, 2002), but there were unresolved tensions between them (Power *et al*, 2004).

In terms of Advanced Skills Teachers, their focus suggested the need for a professional identity which was essentially reflexive and collaborative in character, and responded to socially transformative policy objectives. Yet, like the EAZs themselves, their potential role became caught up in controversy over conflicting priorities (Sutton and Wise, 1999, cited in Sutton *et al*, *op. cit.*, 2000: 418). In the event, research showed very early on that few EAZs ever planned to employ Advanced Skills Teachers (The Education Network, 1998). In the absence of any

national recruitment and deployment policies, it was left up to individual schools to decide whether they could afford to take on Advanced Skills Teachers. This meant that they were unevenly distributed geographically, and mainly internally recruited, with outreach work proving difficult to achieve (Ofsted 2001, 2003). Competition was always bound to limit the scope for collaboration with other schools, with the introduction of school based subject specialists legitimating a pragmatic approach to school improvement that was not always socially inclusive.

A second criticism was that the scheme had been bolted onto existing management structures without sufficient consideration being given to the consequences of doing so. Unlike the threshold payments which were introduced in 2000 as a form of performance related pay, the role of Advanced Skills Teacher rapidly became seen as a job to apply for, relevant to a limited number of teachers, rather than a grade to which all teachers could theoretically aspire. Again, this was heavily criticized on the grounds that it would threaten collegiality within schools, and was likely to be divisive (Blake *et al*, 1999, 2000a and b; Smith and Averis, 1998; Sutton *et al*, *op. cit.*; National Union of Teachers [NUT], 1998; Secondary Heads' Association [SHA], 1998; Professional Association of Teachers [PAT], 1998). In addition, little thought was initially given to whether the introduction of Advanced Skills Teacher posts would have an impact on recruitment to other senior positions in schools, such as head teacher posts, and at the time this caused sufficient concern for it to be raised in the House of Commons (Select Committee on Education and Employment, 1998). As John Howson, a witness to the Select Committee, explained:

*There is a tension which you are well aware of between encouraging those people to stay in the classroom and rewarding them for that, by advanced skill teachers, or indeed by paying them overtime for taking on after school activities, numeracy hours, literacy hours, summer schools and everything else. It produces a remuneration level which makes it a disincentive to then go on and take the strategic leadership job because they can earn approaching the same sort of money at the end of the day.*

(Select Committee on Education and Employment, 1998: 376)

This focus on financial remuneration relates to the concept of ‘commitment as career continuance’ mentioned earlier (Nias, 1981; Tyree, 1996; Yong, 1999). In this case it can be traced back to marketisation and the school choice agenda, rather than the social inclusion policies suggested by outreach activities. It suggests a particular order of priorities, which places the individual at the centre, followed by his or her academic subject, followed by his or her own school, and then the drive for school improvement locally and nationally, as we have illustrated in Figure 1. Like Teach First trainees, here we see professionals with a reflexive disposition towards developing their own careers, in this case by applying for promotion at particular schools. However, Advanced Skills Teachers also have a very clearly defined subject-teacher habitus, developed over a substantial period of time. This meshes with the career development aspects of their role, giving a more specific educational identity than in the case of either Teach First teachers or HLTAs.

Nevertheless, in some respects, the situation of Advanced Skills Teachers is more ambiguous. As a role it represents an elite status, requiring deep subject knowledge

acquired over a period of time, as discussed. This should mean that it relies on a more conventional form of habitus, as Bourdieu might understand it. However, to a large extent the role is also heavily controlled by the government, which appropriates a discourse of skills and skilling to achieve measures of control and accountability. It may be difficult to create new professional identities from within the existing habitus in a situation where there is a substantial degree of external control, even where there is evidence of deep-seated personal and professional transformation having taken place over a period of time. A good way of illustrating the conflict between the internal and external here is to see it as Bernstein might, as a form of official recontextualising (i.e. governmental) as opposed to pedagogic recontextualising.<sup>6</sup>

In defining this new role, however, it is clear that an opportunity has been missed to create a broader ‘activist teacher’ model with the emphasis on the collaborative (Sachs, 2003), in which Advanced Skills Teachers can act as an educational version of a type of public health professional, improving education for all. Instead, the outcome has too often been a somewhat parochial, subject-specific role, with limited scope for transformation of the teaching profession.

**FIGURE 1 HERE**

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<sup>6</sup> Bernstein would describe this as a struggle between an official recontextualising field, created and dominated by the state and its officers, and a pedagogic recontextualising field, created and dominated by the profession [Bernstein (2000) cited in Beck (2009) p4].



## **Conclusion**

This article started by asking whether teachers were being given new opportunities for advancement through the development of a variety of new roles in education, or whether this was an indicator of a degree of fragmentation and disruption in teacher careers instead. If we adopt an analytical tool from Bernstein, we can see great variations amongst the different roles described (Bernstein, *op. cit.*).

## **TABLE 2 HERE**

This is useful in allowing us to identify with some precision the different theoretical characteristics of each role in terms of teacher identity.

Starting with **physical location and deployment** (both categories based on what Bernstein calls ‘Space’), we see that conventional classroom teachers and Teach First trainees occupy a relatively fixed, predictable location and situation from term to term, whereas in theory at least HLTAs and Advanced Skills Teachers tend to be deployed more flexibly by their schools, supporting other staff and pupils as necessary.

In terms of **local identity**, or identity reflected through the lens of education policy, conventional teachers are positioned as having retrospective identities, as they have not necessarily complied with the government’s view of specialization and are therefore perceived in policy terms as being ‘behind time’ (Bernstein, *op. cit.*; Leaton Gray, *op.cit.*). HLTAs are essentially therapeutic in character, offering remedial

support, but not considered as teachers in their own right. Teach First trainees play a largely instrumental role in terms of improving inner city schooling, on the basis of a restricted training programme and potentially only short term involvement with education. Finally, Advanced Skills Teachers are positioned as having prospective ‘forward looking’ identities, as they form part of the cadre of policy compliant extended professionals rewarded under New Labour education policy (Whitty, *op. cit.*).

Regarding **evaluation** (by the self and others), we see differences in the level of intrinsic assurance of quality expected from each role. For example, conventional teachers and Advanced Skills Teachers are closely monitored externally by third parties for compliance with the National Curriculum, but they also base their teaching on practices they have developed themselves over a number of years, monitoring their effectiveness themselves. On the other hand, HLTAs and Teach First trainees (at least in their first year) are directed and monitored very carefully. In the case of Teach First, this is largely because the trainees have had only limited time to develop their own craft as teachers. In their second year in the programme, when they have gained QTS, the extent of monitoring is more like that of other new teachers.

The next category deals with how teachers engage with **knowledge**. The conventional teacher is positioned as a reproducer of knowledge, delivering the national curriculum. The HLTA and Teach First both are in the process of acquiring knowledge, as they are essentially in what are regarded as inexperienced roles that require direction. The Advanced Skills Teacher can be conceptualized as a producer of knowledge, which is then meant to be disseminated through outreach work.

In terms of professional **autonomy**, conventional teachers and, as time goes on, Teach First teachers, have a reasonable amount of autonomy in the classroom. By contrast, HLTAs experience low autonomy on account of working under the close direction of a classroom teacher. Advanced Skills Teachers have the most autonomy, as they are meant to spend one day a week on outreach work, and during this time they are able to set their own agendas to a certain extent.

Finally, in relation to financial **cost**, we see that conventional teachers are expensive, and Advanced Skills Teachers even more so, whereas HLTAs and Teach First trainees initially are substantially cheaper. This has been a factor in workforce remodelling, as due to budgetary constraints work has sometimes been reallocated to inexperienced teachers, or even non teachers, for example during primary school teachers' planning and assessment time, when learning support assistants are put in front of classes without the teacher being present.

Overall, distrust of a deep-seated teacher habitus, developed over a long period of time, does seem to have been used by the government to give legitimacy to its desire to control and restructure the profession. This can be seen as a politicisation of teacher identity. However, this is likely to be limited in its success.

If we consider the different roles described in this article in terms of identifying aspects of teacher habitus, there do seem to be a wide range of shifting and contradictory dispositions which exist concurrently, suggesting that teacher identity

currently has a somewhat unstable construction. The following list is by no means exhaustive, but some examples of these unstable dispositions include:

- Experiencing the desire to communicate knowledge at the same time as not being classified as a teacher (HLTAs).
- Producing original knowledge at the same time as complying with the requirements of a prescriptive National Curriculum (Advanced Skills Teachers).
- Supporting social inclusion policies whilst simultaneously being required to support school choice policies (Advanced Skills Teachers).
- Undertaking an apprenticeship without a commitment to remaining in the profession in the medium to long term (Teach First trainees).
- Being regarded as contributing to a national school improvement programme whilst being required to prioritise initiatives in one individual school and one particular subject area (Advanced Skills Teachers).
- Building a teaching career that may involve frequent changes of school and possible loss of continuity for pupils in the quest to become a better teacher (all roles).

How far these contradictory positions can be reconciled remains to be seen.

Nevertheless, it does appear that there is some sort of rupture, in that roles are becoming increasingly divergent, with some roles closely aligned to government policy, and others perhaps less so. Similarly, there are differential rewards depending on how far teachers are willing and able to align their work to policy initiatives.

It is clear, therefore, that there is significant professional fragmentation taking place. Within this, it is vitally important for the profession to retain a sense of cohesion, otherwise it will become increasingly difficult for the public to understand exactly what teachers represent. This was touched on by Carol Adams, the first Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for England in relation to Every Child Matters. She was concerned that pupils, parents and the wider community could become confused about the unique contribution of the teacher<sup>7</sup>. Therefore greater clarity now needs to be achieved at the same time as embracing legitimate social concerns of the kind addressed by the children's agenda.

The question is whether it will be possible for teacher professionalism to be adequately redefined, so that it is underpinned by a more stable sense of identity and one that is less driven by policy, which may be transient in nature. We feel that teachers should reclaim some of this educational territory, positioning themselves as informed social and political activists in the process, and mediating between the citizen and the state, in the best traditions of Weber (1968). In the contemporary world, this form of active citizenship will entail determining what is best for the children in their care in collaboration with professionals in social and health care and wider social movements. While professionals' views may well be informed by the views of policy makers, there needs to be more confident participation in discussion and debate by all teachers. Only then can the profession be reinvigorated for the challenges ahead.

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<sup>7</sup> Comments made at the Institute of Ideas 'Battle of Ideas' Conference, 29-30 October, 2005.

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**Table 1****School workforce in England**

Teacher type	Inception of role	National or regional role?	Qualified Teacher Status	Definition
Unqualified teachers	Pre-1997	National	No	Unqualified teachers and demonstrators
Learning support assistants	Pre-1997	National	No	Untrained classroom assistant
Higher Level Teaching Assistants	2003	National	No	Trained classroom assistant
Newly qualified teachers	Pre-1997	National	Yes	Teachers in their probationary year
Graduate Teacher Programme trainees	Pre-1997	National	Working towards QTS <sup>8</sup>	Graduate trainees undergoing school-based training
Registered Teacher Programme trainees		National	Working towards QTS	Mature trainees undergoing school-based training
Overseas Trained Teacher	Pre-1997	National	Working towards QTS	Non-EU and Non-EEA trained teachers undergoing school-based QTS assessment
Teach First teachers	2002	London, North West and Midlands	No	New graduates who receive teaching and leadership training while in post
Classroom teachers	Pre-1997	National	Yes	Teachers with one or more years' experience
Fast track teachers	2001	National	Yes	Teachers receiving accelerated management training and promotion
Higher pay scale teachers	2000	National	Yes	Teachers who have undergone a threshold assessment and are able to access higher pay
Chartered London Teachers	2004	London	Yes	London teachers who are on the higher pay scale and who have met performance objectives
Management scale teachers	Pre-1997	National	Yes	Teachers with management responsibilities
Advanced Skills Teachers	1998	National	Yes	Highly skilled classroom teachers with outreach responsibilities
Excellent Teachers	2006	National	Yes	Teachers who help other teachers improve effectiveness
Commissioner's teachers	2003	London	Yes	Advanced Skills Teachers working in challenging schools
Deputy head teachers and assistant head teachers	Pre-1997	National	Yes	Teachers with whole school management responsibilities
Head teachers	Pre-1997	National	Yes	Teachers with whole school management responsibilities

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<sup>8</sup> Qualified Teacher Status

**Table 2**  
**Recontextualised professionalism** (Based on Bernstein, 2000: 45)

	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>HLTA</b>	<b>Teach First</b>	<b>Advanced Skills</b>
<b>Physical Location</b>	Fixed	Flexible	Fixed	Flexible
<b>Deployment</b>	Fixed	Flexible	Fixed	Flexible
<b>Local identity</b>	Retrospective	Therapeutic	Instrumental	Prospective
<b>Evaluation</b>	Internal and external	External	External	Internal and External
<b>Knowledge</b>	Reproducer	Acquirer	Acquirer	Producer
<b>Autonomy</b>	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium/High
<b>Economy</b>	High cost	Low cost	Low cost	Very high cost

**Figure 1**

**Professional priorities for Advanced Skills Teachers**

