Professionalism in South African education: the challenges of developing teacher professional knowledge, practice, identity and voice

Francine de Clercq

Abstract

To change and improve teacher knowledge, practice, behaviour and mindset remains a difficult challenge in South African school education. This article investigates how macro and meso influences beyond the level of the school have shaped teacher professionalisation and professionalism as both are outcomes of complex contradictory forces and factors. The post-1994 period has seen education departments and teacher unions dominate and shape the construction of teacher professionalisation and professionalism. As a result, serious problems continue to exist in the level and quality of teachers' work and attitudes. This article argues that a crucial space exists in which a positive impact can be made by independent professional associations to improve teacher knowledge, practice, identity-formation and mindset. These associations have great potential for working collaboratively with and for teachers to strengthen the voice of the profession and make professional inputs in the teacher-related policy-making process.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to fill a gap in the South African educational literature with regards to the challenges associated with the enhancement of teacher professionalism in post-1994 South African school education. It assesses the factors which contribute to the shaping of teacher professionalisation and professionalism in South Africa today, given the legacy of apartheid and taking into consideration the post-1994 attempts at redressing past inequities and promoting quality.

A qualification is needed at the very start. It is important not to confuse or collapse 'teacher professionalisation' and 'teacher professionalism', as these terms may be related, but are indeed different. This article borrows

Hargreaves' (2000) distinction: professionalisation refers to the nature of teachers' work, working conditions, status and power in society, while professionalism speaks to the profession's internal quality, authority, values and autonomous practices. Teacher professionalisation is a sociological project that centres on the work and status of teaching as a profession; whereas teacher professionalism is a pedagogical project centred on the internal quality of teaching as a profession, with its relative control in making autonomous decisions over teaching practices (SACE, 2005). An understanding of the state of teacher professionalisation therefore assists in framing the way in which teacher professionalism and professional identities develop.

After reviewing debates around teacher professionalism, this article examines how the main factors beyond schools – such as the socio-economic context, state policies and globalisation – impact on teacher professionalisation and professionalism. It then explores the role of teacher unions and how the latter (can) respond to the state's attempt at shaping teacher professionalisation and professionalism.

Thereafter the article proceeds by applying these conceptual lenses to a macro and meso analysis of the pre- and post-1994 South African school education in order to show how the construction and shape of teacher professionalism has been dominated and contested by education departments and unions, with their different agendas. It reviews what the existing South African literature says about teacher professionalism and the relationship between the state and teacher unions (Chisholm, 1999; Swartz, 2004; Govender, 2004; Douglas, 2005; SACE, 2005). It then proposes a new dimension to these analyses by arguing that independent professional associations are crucial forces to assess as they can occupy the space that exists between the two main stakeholders to strengthen teacher professional identity, professionalism and teacher-related policy-making.

Meaning and shaping of teacher professionalism(s)

There is no clear consensus over the meaning of professions and professionalism. Abbott (1988, cited in Gamble, 2010) defines professions as possessing a form of abstract knowledge, which qualifies the occupational grouping to exercise professional jurisdiction. Carr (2000) argues that

professions: provide an important public service; involve a theoretically and practically grounded expertise; have a distinct ethical dimension and code of practice; and require a high degree of individual autonomy and judgement for effective practice.

In the literature, teacher professionalism has either a descriptive/normative or a socially-constructed dynamic definition. The descriptive definition refers to notions of professional expertise, autonomy and responsibility (or self-regulation), as demonstrated in work practices (Hoyle and John, 1995). The three tenets of professionalism according to Gamble (2010) are: abstract professional knowledge to defend professional jurisdiction against competition or subordination; collective autonomy; and accountability. Demirkasimoglu (2010) adds a normative dimension by referring to professional competences, behaviours, attitudes and values that inform teacher performance in achieving the highest standards and improving service quality.

The second socially-constructed definition stands against essentialist definitions of professionalism and recognises competing versions whose meanings and delineations are sources of conflicts and change over time (Whitty, 2008). Stevenson, Carter and Passy (2007, p.2) agree that teacher professionalism is "an ideological concept that is neither static nor universal, but located in a particular socio-historical context and fashioned to represent and mobilise particular interests." This is why Sachs (2001) argues that today there is an ideological struggle between managerial professionalism – or the regulatory discourse of the state intended to control teachers and their practices – and democratic professionalism – or a democratic discourse, initiated from within the profession or teacher unions as an occupational strategy. The latter is about protecting teachers against dilution of their work practices and/or establishing greater collective autonomy to determine conditions of practice (self-regulation) as well as professional and ethical standards (Gamble, 2010).

What is required is an empirical investigation of how and by whom the discourse of professionalism is constructed, shaped, mediated and practiced. Evans (2010) does not subscribe to such normative or discursive definitions of professionalism, which she argues are 'demanded' (by teachers' organisations) or 'required' (by the state) professionalism. She prefers a qualitatively neutral definition of professionalism, as something that is

enacted (and not something that ought to be); in other words, a professional practice that is observed, perceived and interpreted:

> what teachers do, how and why they do it; what they know and understand; where and how they acquire their knowledge and understanding; what attitudes they hold; what codes of behaviour they follow; what their function is; what purposes they perform; what quality of service they provide; and the level of consistency incorporated into the above (Evans, 2010, p.855).

She distinguishes three main components of professionalism: behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual. Other scholars emphasise the importance of subjective components of professionalism, such as teachers' identities, attitudes and engagement with their work, employers, learners, and colleagues. Teachers' subjective positioning and social identification are greatly influenced by teachers' identities or images of themselves. Carrim (2001) argues that teachers have multiple identities which are negotiated through various constitutive identity-formation processes, which have to be investigated empirically in a given context. These processes can be personal (the product of history, capacity, knowledge, beliefs, and values), social (the product of socio-cultural structures and state policies) and/or situated (the result of teacher collective interaction/negotiation).

Sachs (2001) distinguishes two broad teacher identities that are useful for this article, even if insufficient. There are teachers who are compliant, over-dependent on the state's understanding of teaching. This passive compliant identity makes teachers respond to the state as workers or state functionaries, with little authority, power or interest in controlling their work. This leads to a narrow form of self-serving teacher professionalism, which is more concerned about teachers' working conditions than recognising their social agency. The second group engages with the state as independent pro-active professionals, committed to improving their practices and school education as a public good. This activist identity makes teachers engage both within as well as outside their workplace for better education quality and equity. This is the ingredient of a broad form of democratic professionalism which, through a genuine dialogue with other responsible stakeholders, builds a common vision and strategy about school improvement.

For the purpose of this article, the constructed and descriptive definitions are both retained. It is important to recognise teacher professionalism as the complex outcome of contradictory forces or factors – which are both external and internal to the profession; whether this involves discourses or pressures

from international agencies, the state, the public or the unions (Douglas, 2005). However, at the micro-level, it is also necessary to acknowledge what is and, if possible, how practitioners mediate the various constructions of professionalism and enact it with their knowledge, practice, identities and mindsets.

Let us now turn to a discussion of the macro-influences on teachers' work and status – or what Hargreaves calls 'professionalisation' – and how these delimit and shape teacher professionalism.

Macro socio-economic influences, teachers' work and professionalisation

Hargreaves (2000) identifies different ages of teacher professionalism in countries such as the US, Canada and the UK. He constructs these ages by studying the context and evolution of teachers' work and status over the past 50 years as outcomes of changing socio-economic and other factors. In the first age, in the 1950s, most teachers were expected to transmit pre-determined knowledge to learners, through standardised and prescribed teaching procedures and methods. Hargreaves (2000, p.153) calls this the "pre-professional" age, when teachers were regarded as a labour force, for whom it was compulsory to follow departmental rules and regulation in transmitting pre-specified syllabi. Teachers were treated as mere workers, with only basic technical competencies, and required to deliver a teacher-proof curriculum. By the late 1960s, in response to civil rights movements mobilising against social inequities, schools felt pressurised to produce better quality education for learners from under-privileged backgrounds. Teachers were then expected to acquire greater pedagogical competences to enable them to adapt the curriculum and syllabi to their learners' context and constraints. This shift led to the second "autonomous professional" age of Hargreaves, when teachers started to behave as professionals, with the discretion to use their professional knowledge to adapt their teaching content, strategies and activities to reach their different learners. As teachers gained more autonomy over their work, they were expected to improve their work practices by sharing their experience and by acting as reflective practitioners. Hargreaves (2000, p.153) names this the "collegial professional" age.

The fourth 'post-professional' age is associated with the global competitive era of the 1990s and the neo-liberal market-driven policies adopted by many countries at the time to improve the productivity and efficiency of public sector employees. Education departments adopted a form of managerialism to control teachers, with new forms of monitoring of teachers' work, performance management, narrowly-conceived standardised curriculum frameworks and/or prescribed content knowledge. Teacher expertise and autonomy became increasingly circumscribed to fall in line with the centralist agendas of the 1990s. Teacher responsibility was redefined to include new regimes of performance-based accountability, which placed high demands on teachers, often without corresponding support and resources to meet their needs and their changing classrooms. Ozga (1995) argues that such performance-based reforms de-professionalised teachers, by reducing their professional status, discretion and judgment.

However, the impact of globalisation was not one-dimensional. Hargreaves (2000) notes its contradictory dimensions, given its ambiguity and uncertainty as well as the complexity of its educational settings. The changing global conditions required teachers to be professional and proactive in order to function adequately. Globalisation and the ICT revolution also brought about the possibility for teachers to network and share their practices and challenges with other professional groups beyond their schools. Hargreaves (2000, p.153) explains the post-modern age as:

> a struggle between forces and groups intent on de-professionalising the work of teaching, and other forces and groups who are seeking to re-define teacher professionalism and professional learning in more positive and principled modern ways that are flexible, wide-ranging and inclusive in nature.

These four ages characterise the school system of some western countries, but are not a template for the trajectories of others. These ages also co-exist within an education system, especially when the latter is characterised, as in South Africa, by strong inequalities in teacher education, teacher competences and practices, as well as working conditions. Given similarities and differences in various education systems, these changing ages are retained here as conceptual tools for the analysis of how socio-economic and political forces influenced changes in South African teachers' work, status and knowledge in the context of global teacher-related reforms.

Teacher unionism

Teachers' work, status and professionalism are also influenced by teacher unions and the way they mobilise and develop their members to advance their interests. Scholars are divided about the influence of teacher unions. Moe (2002) argues that teacher unions are, by definition, more concerned about their members' immediate interests than about meeting the challenges of improving their performance and the quality of school education. Such scholars perceive unions as a conservative, self-serving force that opposes government reforms which intensify teachers' work, regardless of their potential for better quality teaching and learning. Hess and West (2000) contend that unions use collective bargaining as a basis for political and/or economic power in education to advance their members' narrowly-conceptualised interests. Because of this and due to the growing professional autonomy of teachers in the West during the 1980s, these scholars argue that it was time for the state to monitor and improve teachers' productivity and practices through tighter accountability to the state and the public over what they teach and produce.

An opposite view held by Villegas-Reimers (2003) is that, even though teacher unions and better professional practices are often not good partners, there are unions in the US and Canada committed to improving teachers' status, performance and professionalism. Bascia (2003) notes that pro-active US teacher unions encourage teachers to undertake action research on their own practices and to contribute to the shaping of state reforms on teaching content and standards, as well as on issues of social justice in schools. Such unions understand that greater teacher professionalisation and professionalism has the potential of protecting their members' long-term interests. In analysing unions' influence on teacher professionalism, it is therefore important to examine their discourse and strategies.

Teacher professionalisation and professionalism in South Africa: the legacy of apartheid education

The changing nature of teachers' professionalisation in South African education did not follow the western trajectory, mainly because of the *apartheid* education legacy and the way the post-1994 education

reconstruction was dealt with. A brief review of the pre-1994 education context as well as its dominant forces and conflicts around issues of teacher professionalisation and professionalism may be useful here.

The *apartheid* regime enforced segregated education with racially-fragmented departments that controlled white and black teachers and their work differently. A behaviourist-type of 'fundamental pedagogics' was imposed on all schools, requiring teachers to transmit a prescribed curriculum and syllabus and not allowing teacher autonomous interpretation. This period shared strong resemblances with Hargreaves' pre-professional age, but with repression of black teachers, who were treated as mere workers to control, while white teachers were allowed limited professional discretion. These conditions shaped their respective practices, identities and unionisation in ways that were fundamentally different.

Hyslop (1999) explains that racially-fragmented teachers' organisations responded differently to the *apartheid* education dispensation. Legally-recognised regional white teachers' organisations focused on apolitical professional issues, while non-recognised coloured, Indian and African teachers organised on a regional basis to voice their frustrations about poor working conditions and repressive treatment. Most of the militant non-white teachers' organisations eventually regrouped in the 1990s under the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), which affiliated as a workers' union to the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and fought for political and educational democracy as well as improved working conditions (Hyslop, 1999).

All these unions had different views and strategies around teachers' work and needs. Three broad tendencies can be distinguished by their different stance and demands around teacher professionalism (Govender, 2004). A first workerist approach, associated with some non-white teacher unions, objected to their poor differential and discriminatory treatments and flexed their muscles with strikes and protests for better working conditions and collective bargaining rights. Soon, many of these unions changed and adopted a workerist-cum-political approach, using industrial tactics and political demonstrations to demand better working conditions, as well as political and educational freedom. Chisholm (1999) explains how SADTU mobilised the 'worker' and 'political' identity of teachers to fight for the abolition of *apartheid* education and the *apartheid* system, as well as to demand collective bargaining rights and a democratisation of education management and

monitoring. It embraced the rhetoric of 'professionalism' but did not mobilise to translate it into concrete programmes or campaigns for teachers' improved professional identities, responsible behaviour and autonomy. These issues seemed to have been relegated to a later stage, and remain a serious challenge for SADTU up to today.

The third approach came from the white and some Indian, coloured and African teachers' organisations mainly concerned with improving the profession's status, competences, behaviours and attitudes, while discarding the political mobilisation of its members for the abolition of *apartheid* (Govender, 2004). Most of these unions merged in the early 1990s into the National Association of Professional Teachers Organizations of South Africa (NAPTOSA), which continued to downplay the political alignment of its members for a focus on greater professional autonomy, competences, responsibilities and ethical values. Govender (2004) notes that NAPTOSA was also committed to the right of every child to receive quality education within an equitable and non-discriminatory system of education. Finally, a group of white conservative unions from the Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwyserunie (SAOU) organised around professional issues, avoiding any workerist or political issues in or outside the workplace.

Upon the advent of democracy in 1994, it was clear that not much shared history and discourse existed around teacher professionalism. This was because the practices, competences, attitudes, responsibilities and identities of teachers had been shaped and constituted differently by their specific treatments from, and responses to, the segregated education departments.

Post-1994 teacher-related reforms, teacher professionalisation and professionalism

The main data sources for this section come from a wider 'political economy' study of socially contested teacher evaluation policies (see De Clercq, 2011). These include teacher-related policy and policy analysis readings of the 1994-2011 period, including their contexts, texts and implementation, as these help locate the views of different key actors involved in these policies. Semi-structured discussions were also conducted with eight senior education officials, three senior unionists, two SACE officials and two educationists. They were asked about their position towards these policies, their enabling

and restricting components, as well as their organisation's responses, mediation and implementation strategies.

Legislative changes and emergent education stakeholders

After 1994, a new socio-political and educational configuration emerged with implications for teacher professionalisation and the social construction and state of professionalism. The new government declared its commitment to working towards a stakeholder democracy by incorporating multiple stakeholders in the negotiation of reform changes. The 1994 White Paper on education and training outlined a vision of a transformed education system dedicated to better quality and to equity. Radical legislative policy changes based on extensive dialogue with all stakeholders followed.

The first wave of aspirational teacher-related policies aimed at improving the quality, status and professionalisation of teachers. The 1997 Higher Education Act incorporated most colleges of education into existing higher education institutions to upgrade teacher education and qualifications; sophisticated and often revised curriculum and assessment frameworks, based on an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) system, encouraged teachers to work collegially as professionals (close to what Hargreaves describe in the third age); the 1998 Employment of Educators Act regulated collective bargaining between employers and teacher unions; the 2000 Norms and Standards for Educators (NSE) specified new professional standards, criteria for the recognition and evaluation of teachers' qualifications, as well as expanded social and professional roles for teachers (Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson and Pillay 2000; Douglas, 2005).

These policies, which aimed at structural changes for the greater professionalisation of teachers' work and status, represented a significant shift in discursive practices, moving from assumptions of teachers as workers or state functionaries to a construction of teachers as self-driven professionals, committed to the improvement of their practices (Barasa and Mattson, 1998).

Education departments and teacher unions agreed on these ambitious policy discourses, but differed on how to translate them into realities and on how to prioritise the necessary policy instruments and processes (cited in De Clercq, 2011). The department urged teachers to behave as accountable professionals

and drive their own development, while the unions, and especially SADTU with its disadvantaged members, insisted that teachers received first adequate teacher development (TD) from the department before being made to account. Indeed, the policy implementation challenges overwhelmed disadvantaged black teachers whose work, knowledge, practices and attitudes had been profoundly undermined by years of professional neglect under *apartheid*. As Morrow (1989) notes, most black teachers suffered from inadequate teacher education, a culture of obedience to authority, and over-dependence on outside assistance for what and how they had to teach. In contrast, white teachers benefitted from quality teacher education, better treatment from education departments, superior school infrastructure and resources, putting them in a better position to implement these policies.

Teacher unions refocused their strategies. SAOU engaged for the first time with the collective bargaining process to make professional demands as long as these did not undermine learners' right to education (Govender, 2004). NAPTOSA, with its racially mixed membership, did the same while also focusing on issues of redress and equity in teacher education and in schools. Both SAOU and NAPTOSA saw better school and TD provisions as a way to promote the professional status and practices of their members within the new state-defined education system (cited in De Clercq, 2011).

The fast-growing militant SADTU (with the largest teachers' membership) adopted a two-pronged strategy of redress and equity which challenged the existing system by demanding 1) participation in macro- educational policy-making with a view to transforming the system and 2) the improvement of its members' status and working conditions (Govender, 2004). SADTU's first success was to widen the scope of the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) to include agreements on all issues impacting on teachers' work (Swartz, 1994). It also pushed the department to address the poor professional knowledge and competences of disadvantaged teachers by agreeing to the 1998 Development Appraisal System (DAS), a teacher-driven agreement, which replaced the previous fault-finding evaluation of inspectors and school managers.

A second success was the establishment of the South African Council of Educators (SACE), an independent professional body whose mandate and responsibility was to promote greater professionalism amongst teachers through professional norms, standards, and values. Its discursive practices were about stronger teacher commitment towards professional practice,

responsibility and ethical conduct. SACE's first move was to accredit teachers with a recognised professional qualification for the duration of their whole career, thereby rejecting the idea of a renewable accreditation based on teachers' competences and practices. SACE took this pragmatic and politically safe decision because it did not want to victimise the disadvantaged black teachers who had been subjected to poor quality pre-service and in-service teacher education (cited in De Clercq, 2011). SACE's work focused mainly on the implementation of the professional code of conduct to discipline teachers who acted inappropriately within the profession. It also organised workshops to help teachers diagnose their professional development needs.

It is argued here that SACE's weakness was to neglect the promotion of a dialogue among teachers on how to advance their professionalism and professional identities, whether through provisions of large-scale TD or other campaigns. SACE did not appear to recognise the need to improve teacher mindset, motivation and responsibility, something which the department and the unions did not directly address. The department was interested in implementing ambitious policies, while the unions – and in particular SADTU – were keen to secure promotion for their members and protect those who struggled to enact the curriculum, given their poor subject/pedagogical knowledge and weak department support.

SACE's work was also undermined by its problematic governing board, which became a site of conflicts amongst the majority of its members who were representatives of unions and education departments – with the latter accusing SADTU of capturing SACE for its sectarian interests (cited in De Clercq, 2011). Many professionals, who were at different times on the SACE board, resigned in frustration with the political dynamics of the board and its rather ineffective executive leadership (cited in De Clercq, 2011). As a result, SACE could not forge an independent position and use the professional space provided to strengthen teachers' collective professional identity, responsibility, voice and social agency.

Other professional subject-based associations emerged at the time to focus on improving teachers' practices and engagement with their work and colleagues, and did not compete with SACE in building teacher professional standards, responsibility, conduct and public standing.

By the late 1990s, conceptions and practices of teacher professionalism remained ambiguous and varied. The state wanted teachers to become more competent and responsible professionals, while the unions continued to contest the sequence of steps required for reaching that goal. On the ground, a continuum of professionalism remained, ranging from a narrow conception with teachers pursuing their sectarian interests to a broader conception with teachers determined to improve their professional knowledge and autonomy, while others were also committed to learners and/or participation in policy-making for better school education for all. No strong stakeholder or organisation focused directly on what Evans (2010) sees as two important constituent components of professionalism: the behavioural and attitudinal. This was a serious omission as South African school education demanded a cultural transformation of teachers' passive behaviour, attitude and mindset into something professionally responsible and pro-active.

Polarised strategies around professionalisation and professionalism

The government's initial commitment to stakeholder democracy and participatory decision-making did not last long. With the 1997 GEAR market-driven policies, the economic restructuring and fiscal austerity measures, the balance of forces shifted, causing greater polarisation among stakeholders (Chisholm, Motal and Vally, 2003). In education, concerned about the poor culture of teaching and learning, the department decided to control teachers through greater regulation and accountability. As Jansen (2004, p. 54) explains,

> to the extent that regulation is an intimately political act, the stage was set for making teachers accountable as professional actors within public schools that in large measure still bore the unmistakable marks of instability of the 1970s.

The second teacher-related policy phase was characterised by a departmental managerialist approach to the promotion of efficiency in policy implementation and education delivery. Shifting away from a focus on teacher development, the department looked for greater monitoring and control measures over office staff, schools and teachers (De Clercq, 2011).

The 2001 National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation (WSE) subjected schools and teachers to standardised bureaucratic monitoring, and this without any consultation with unions. SADTU boycotted the WSE for eroding the

autonomy of schools and teachers as well as contradicting the spirit of DAS of empowering teachers to be reflective professionals, able to drive their own development. It also criticised the WSE for being an unfairly judgemental inspection system, which poorly assessed school/teacher performance by not examining the deeper causes of poor performance, linked to both the destructive *apartheid* legacy and inadequate department support (cited in De Clercq, 2011). The 2002 ELRC Performance Management and Development System measured the work performance of public servants against pre-specified performance standards, in the hope of introducing a performance-oriented culture. The 2003 systemic evaluation of grade 3 and 6 learners aimed at benchmarking school performance and tracking schools' progress in the achievement of set goals, producing in the process performance data for greater school accountability.

Most unions reacted to these measures by demanding that departmental TD precedes any school appraisal or accountability. They negotiated with the department the 2003 Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), which combined DAS, performance management and the WSE as a holistic school and teacher appraisal system, winning the principle that development had to take place before any summative evaluation. The IQMS agreement was far from being a rational outcome but rather the result of ELRC compromises, with stakeholders having different designs and interpretations (De Clercq, 2008). The department hoped the IQMS could become the backbone of a national monitoring system, which would report on the most effective and ineffective schools and teachers (cited in De Clercq, 2011). The unions, and SADTU in particular, remained oppositional and continued to pressurise the department for a large-scale TD plan and attending strategies. The existing poor department support frustrated unions and teachers so much that they decided to manipulate the IQMS scores to qualify for a bonus (cited in De Clercq, 2011).

This second policy phase was managed through a top-down state imposition or at best through strained negotiations between education departments and teacher unions. The state was interested in pushing for a form of managerial professionalism, with its emphasis on auditing, accountability and control measures in the name of efficiency. These measures were not as aggressive as the West's performativity approach, which measured teacher performance in terms of learners' results. Also, contrary to what international agencies recommended in countries they funded, the power of unions was not undermined in post-1999 South Africa. However, unions responded to the

second policy phase in a more defensive than pro-active manner. They confined themselves to criticise the department for jeopardising policy implementation with its lack of meaningful teacher support, while SADTU boycotted some monitoring and accountability policies (De Clercq, 2011).

What was yet again not addressed was the issue of teacher professional and public responsibility, something which Evans (2010) notes is embedded in the behavioural and attitudinal constituents of teacher professionalism.

Teacher development and enhanced professionalism

The INSET realities did not improve for teachers for a long while, partly because of the absence of a TD policy framework, strategy and plan. By 2007, the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (NPFTED) gave conceptual coherence to the teacher education system; it committed the DoE to support TD activities and made SACE responsible for the coordination and management of the implementation and quality assurance of the Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) system. Contestations soon arose between the two main stakeholders over what constitutes TD and TD points[1] (De Clercq, 2011), but without much engagement with the kind of TD that could impact positively on Evans' intellectual, behavioural and attitudinal components.

The institutionalisation of TD did not stop the department from looking for a better national monitoring system, given the poor reliability of the IQMS and the inadequate work performance of the monitoring and support units of the PDEs (cited in De Clercq, 2011). The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), a quasi-independent body, was given the responsibility of evaluating schools and the support they receive from department officials (DoE, 2009). This was the first time that the educational bureaucracy was to be subjected to independent evaluation measures, something schools and unions had always demanded (cited in De Clercq, 2011). It is interesting to note that Taylor (2011, p.6), the new NEEDU CEO, identifies another serious problem prior to TD: the hiring of education officials and school staff:

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[1]   The NPFTED document specifies that teachers have to accumulate a minimum of 150 TD points every 3 years.

a principle function of unions, political parties, party factions, and other groupings of convenience is to act as patronage networks which distribute [better employment] opportunity to their members.

He proposes that "teachers applying for posts. . . should pass the relevant subject content test before appointment; the same should apply to applicants for heads of subject departments, and curriculum officials in district and provincial offices (Taylor, 2011, p.54). It is difficult to imagine how unions and other educational institutions would envisage such meritocratic proposal to deal with a deeper cause of low staff performance.

Subsequently, the 2011 Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) made a Bachelor of Education degree or Advanced Diploma in Teaching (both at NQF Level 7) the minimum teacher professional and academic qualification. It specified clear requirements and guidelines for teacher qualifications and learning programmes, which were to address "the poor content and conceptual knowledge found amongst teachers. . ." (DHET, 2011, p.7). It emphasised the integration of theoretical and applied competences to draw reflexively from integrated and applied knowledge in order to work flexibly in a variety of contexts.

The 2011 Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development put aside large funds for the establishment of national and provincial teacher development institutes, district teacher development centres and, interestingly, the establishment of "professional learning communities (PLCs) to strengthen teacher professionalism" (DBE/DHET, 2011, p.14). PLCs promote collaborative teacher reflection on and learning from practices, and set higher standards of practice and ethics, but can only function if supported by outside experts with professional knowledge and understanding of context. Another advance is the unions' intention to set up their TD institutes, while continuing to pressurise the department for delivering on its nationwide TD plan.

But how will the department and unions build the capacity to support teachers with the needed conceptual, reflective and practical knowledge to influence practices and behaviours? Some educationists aware of insufficient departmental and national support capacity proposed a different form of support intervention for disadvantaged teachers (Schreuder, 2008; Fleisch, 2012). They argue that these teachers required more detailed and specified instructional content and practices for each subject and grade, from which

they could learn and build. This led to the primary literacy and numeracy strategies of the Western Cape (2006) and Gauteng (2010). Interestingly, the 2011 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) also provides a higher level of specificity on the means by which to achieve learning outcomes, in the hope of assisting teachers struggling to develop and implement their own learning programmes. CAPS specifies the learning content for each Assessment Standard, methods of teaching and examples of good teaching practices. This trend in curriculum changes has been criticised as a state expedient attempt to prescribe what has to be taught and how, thereby underemphasising the need for teachers to acquire greater intellectual and reflexive knowledge.

Thus, 17 years into the democratic dispensation, South African teachers' work, status and professionalism have evolved, even if accompanied by somewhat ambiguous changes, which hold only some similarities with Hargreaves' 4th post-modern age. On the one hand, greater teacher professionalisation and potential active professionalism were made possible by some post-1994 policies and new social and educational structures, such as union participation in policy agreements; SACE; teachers' broadened roles; higher teacher professional qualifications; TD provisions focused on the interconnection of various intellectual, applied and practical knowledge; and curriculum and assessment policy, with some professional autonomy.

On the other hand, there were elements of de-professionalisation, with greater regulation and intensification of teachers' work, and assumptions of a compliant teaching force that had to be tightly monitored. The ambitious OBE-based curriculum overburdened many teachers, and was amended too many times for teachers to engage actively with each new version. The 2011 CAPS, which was advisory and not prescriptive, risks frustrating competent teachers wanting to protect their autonomy, while making less competent teachers more dependent on the state's curriculum and assessment practices, and therefore less able to develop into autonomous reflective professionals. The lack of human capacity and resources to deliver meaningful TD was also against teachers, and so were controlling departmental evaluation measures, which demoralised teachers, many of whom pleaded with their unions for meaningful opportunities to learn and grow professionally.

Thus, in this period the social construction of teacher professionalism continues to be monopolised, albeit also contested, by education departments and unions with their conflicting agendas. Little attention was paid to

changing teacher mindset and behaviour to take responsibility for the quality of their teaching and school education as a whole. The professional space provided to SACE was not exploited with effective forward-looking strategies. However, SACE could contribute to meaningful TD and professionalism, with its recent increased responsibility as coordinator and quality assurer of the CPTD system, but only if it develops a strong independent professional leadership as well as social capital, through effective partnerships with other genuine professional associations and TD providers.

Teacher professionalism and the role of independent professional associations

If professionalism generally refers to the professional knowledge, autonomy, behaviour and ethics of teachers; in South Africa, it requires different professional organisations to generate deep changes in the intellectual knowledge, mindset and values of teachers. Yet, it is a priority for teachers to develop stronger professional identities and responsible commitment to learners and quality school education as a whole.

The 2011 TD plan is welcomed in this regard, even though there are serious obstacles in translating it into appropriate provisions which are tailored to the local and contextual needs of teachers as well as promote teacher professionalism. The problem is that the majority of teachers have deeply ingrained negativity and scepticism towards their jobs and developmental programs aimed at their teaching practices as they have mostly experienced these as seriously inadequate.

The literature on teacher change discusses extensively how to change teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Some scholars argue that changes in beliefs and values occur through TD, which then lead to changes in classroom practices and behaviours. Guskey (2002) reverses this causality, arguing that beliefs and attitudes change *after* an exposure to and experience of changed classroom practices, associated with better learner achievement. Clarke and Peter (1993, cited in Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002) criticise this linear sequential view of the teacher change process, while Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) argue that change occurs through the mediations of teacher reflection and enactment in four domains: the personal domain of

knowledge, beliefs and attitudes; the domain of professional practice; the domain of consequence (outcomes) and the external domain (sanctions or stimulus). For them, the TD form with the most potential at nurturing teacher reflection and enactment in these domains is the PLC. However, South African PLCs can only do this with access to strong continuous support and guidance from outside professional facilitators.

Another way to nurture teacher reflection and enactment in the personal, professional and consequential domains is through independent professional associations. These associations, with their focus on better professional practices, mindset and long-term interests among teachers, can play a leading role in making teachers responsible, motivated and committed to quality education for all. Such associations have great potential as an interface between their members and society: they can support teachers in implementing a curriculum, in promoting a professional community to advance professional expertise, knowledge and commitment in the discipline/subject as well as in transforming them into pro-active professionals interacting and learning in a socially situated manner. As Hilferty (2007, p.240) argues, genuine professional organisations constitute a platform or "entry point into the politics of curriculum policy-making [. . .] strategic sites for professional development reform [. . .] and active participants in the social construction of teacher professionalism". By engaging politically and claiming a role in curriculum policymaking, professional associations can give teachers a collective voice by means of which to drive their own professionalism.

At present, there are a few South African discipline-based professional associations that bring teachers together on a voluntary basis from across the profession, to focus on improving professional practices and standards. The Association of Mathematics Educators of South Africa (AMESA) or the Southern African Association for Research in Maths, Science and Technology Education (SAARMSTE) are such independent discipline-based professional associations, which emerged organically, and emphasise the value of teacher collaboration and networks and the improvement of teachers' professionalism and school education for all. For example, AMESA declares its commitment to:

● encouraging its members to strive towards a high standard of professionalism;

- promoting and disseminating research related to Mathematics Education;
- formulating policy statements on matters regarding Mathematics Education and promoting of such perspectives among its members, policy-making bodies and organs in civil society involved in education;
- engaging actively in Mathematics Education projects that will result in the social, economic, political and cultural development of society (www.amesa.org.za).

SAARMSTE has 'chapters' which connect its members to one another and promote a supportive environment for practitioners to undertake research, to reflect and improve on their practice (www.saarmste.org). Unlike SACE, these independent associations are led by university-based professional educators and use experts to assist with their professional developmental activities.

These associations can never become mass teacher organisations, but they could secure enough space and power to develop a critical mass of teachers with strong professional identities and responsible mindsets as well as collective voice and social agency. If they then were to lobby for formal representation on policy-making bodies (with responsibility for curriculum and assessment), they could contribute to teacher-related policy-making and quality school education for all. Finally, SACE could play an indirect role, as coordinator and quality assurer of the CPTD, by promoting the growth and contribution of such professional associations.

Conclusion

Teacher professionalism needs strengthening as a matter of priority. This has to be achieved partly through the development of teacher professional knowledge and competences, but also through subjective constitutive processes which improve teacher professional identity, mindset, behaviour and values. The enhancement of teacher professionalism cannot be done through collective bargaining negotiations between education departments and unions, or through narrowly-conceptualised TD programs. The challenge for SACE is to develop a visionary leadership committed to promote and work with independent professional associations, in order to oversee the

development of teacher professional knowledge, practice, mindset and identity, as well as responsibility for better quality schooling for all.

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Francine de Clercq
School of Education
University of the Witwatersrand

francine.declercq@wits.ac.za