
Accountability, Teacher Professionalism and Education Reform in England

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ABSTRACT In recent years, education policies and reforms in the United Kingdom, particularly in England and Wales, have sought to establish greater accountability to stakeholders, largely through establishing greater central control and regulation of the school curriculum and assessment system. Such an emphasis on accountability has had an impact on the ways in which professionalism has been conceptualised by governments, and by teachers themselves in the micro-political climate of individual schools. This article examines the ways in which accountability has functioned as a keyword in relation to teachers' professionalism; it also examines specific ways in which teachers identified and articulated changing notions of accountability as a consequence of reforms in education in England in the 1990s.

Introduction

Debate and discussion about the professional identity and role of teachers is not new; it has been conducted in various forms throughout this century, and even before. One reason for the continuing debate is that teacher professionalism is, as Helsby (1995) argued, a contested concept: there are differing ideologies informing views of professionalism in teaching. In the United Kingdom, particularly in England and Wales, the education policies and reforms of the 1980s and 1990s sought to make education more accountable to its stakeholders, primarily through establishing greater central control and regulation of the school curriculum and assessment system. The reforms largely bypassed genuine consultation with teachers and schools, and seemed to impose on them ever more prescriptive requirements, along with increasing direction and scrutiny from central government, and quasi-autonomous agencies such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). In public forms of discourse, teachers and schools have been represented as being in need of reform. Such an emphasis on external accountability has had an impact on the ways in which professionalism has been conceptualised by governments and by teachers themselves in the micro-political contexts of individual schools.

Few people would disagree that increased accountability is a good thing; or that standards in schools should be raised; or that there should be more choice in education. However, accountability is an ambiguous term in discourses about education; within it are condensed a range of meanings and emotions. The ways in which terms such as accountability, standards, and choice are used can also serve political ends. It has been argued (for example, Epstein, 1993; Troyna, 1994) that from the 1980s, in education, and in other areas of public life, the language of a "set of political principles associated with liberal democratic convictions" was adopted by those pursuing political aims which were neither liberal nor democratic (Troyna, 1994, p. 5). Troyna drew on the work of the American political theorist, Murray Edelman (e.g. 1964; 1977), who suggested that some words and phrases operate symbolically within a political context, and within them are condensed a range of referents. In a British context, Raymond Williams's (1976) concept of keywords also has similarities with the condensation symbol. In his analysis of culture and its production, Williams argued that the identification of keywords, particularly within a semantic field such as education, could offer a way of connecting particular uses, similarities, dissimilarities and changes in the way they are understood. An important aspect of Williams's analysis is that it begins by considering the common-sense multiple meanings which have become associated with terms, and also the contexts within which they are used. In this respect, the importance of the concept of keywords, or condensation symbols, is that it allows an analysis of how changes in education can be achieved not only through enforcement by legislation, but also through discursive practices.

A recent example of such a keyword in education is *choice*. Within the discourses about parental choice, education has been represented in metaphors related to commodity production and market forces; parents have been cast as consumers whose choice is guided largely by schools' performance in tests or public examinations. Although this has been represented as the consensus view of parental choice, several research studies which investigated parental views and choices in education (e.g. Elliott, 1981a; Hughes et al, 1994; Bowe et al, 1994) found that parents neither saw themselves as consumers, nor education as a product. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that in the research reported by Hughes et al, parents of children in primary schools in England increasingly began to identify themselves as consumers during the course of the study. It is possible that the reiteration of particular statements or metaphors in public forms of discourse, over a period of time, may lead to the assumption of such attitudes or beliefs by those who previously had not done so. Hence, the discursive practices attached to particular phenomena may have a strong effect on the ways in which they are perceived by the public.

I have argued elsewhere that accountability has functioned as an important keyword in discourses about education (Poulson, 1996). In studies of accountability in education undertaken in the late 1970s and early 1980s (e.g. Elliott, 1981a, 1981b; Becher et al, 1981), there was found to be a difference between those who regarded accountability as self-regulation –

for example, teachers' responsibility to themselves as professionals, to their colleagues or professional associates, pupils, parents, and to society at large – and those who regarded accountability in education as something which was externally imposed through contractual obligation, inspection, testing and other regulatory mechanisms. There were also two different perspectives among those who regarded accountability as a process of self-regulation: one perspective defined accountability in terms of moral obligation, which emphasised giving voluntary accounts of decisions or practices; and another which saw it as being called to account. The difference between these two views centred on the context in which an account might be given. In the former case, it involved explaining and justifying in a context of dialogue, whereas the latter need involve no more than giving solicited information or responding to questions. Elliott emphasised that one of the major issues teachers faced in allowing themselves to be called to account was how they reconciled this with their idea of professional expertise (1981b, p. 75).

Representing teachers as being in need of external scrutiny has, potentially, undermined the importance of them giving voluntary accounts and justifications of their practice in a context of dialogue. Equally, emphasis on the right of parents, governors, and external agencies such as OFSTED to call teachers and schools to account has also discouraged the notion of accountability as dialogue between stakeholders. Thus, the restricted notion of accountability through control has, potentially, led to a narrower understanding of teachers' professionalism. As I have already suggested, this situation was achieved as much through discourse and the manipulation of language, as through legislation and policy. An important issue is how changing notions of accountability in public discourses about education have affected teachers themselves; their perceptions of professional identity; and their roles and relationships within school institutions. Analysis of the ways in which a *status quo*, and an apparent position of consensus can be constructed through discourse, in education, or any other field, can be undertaken relatively easily at the macro level of public discourse in the form of political speeches, media coverage, and official documents. It is less easy to examine the institutional and individual construction of such terms as accountability; or their relationship to more public forms of discourse. However, such an examination potentially allows connections to be made between more formal theoretical analyses of change in education, or of professionalism, and the lived experience and practical reality of teachers themselves in the micro-political contexts of schools as social institutions. Reporting on a study of professionalism and teachers' development, Helsby (1995, p. 329) maintained that further research was needed to explore teachers' responses to current developments in education policy; and to examine the extent to which, in practice, teachers were able to inscribe their own meanings in relation to emerging government policy texts.

Accountability and Professionalism after the National Curriculum

This article examines the ways in which teachers in eight secondary schools in different parts of England identified the issue of accountability as having had an effect on their professional role and work. Two particular aspects are examined: the teachers' perceptions of accountability in relation to management and professional relationships at school level; and the organisation of work, and professional identity, within subject departments. The examples are taken from a qualitative multi-site case study of the implementation of the National Curriculum for English in eight local education authority maintained comprehensive schools in different parts of England. The fieldwork in the study was undertaken in the early to mid-1990s. The schools were located in diverse areas in England, from inner cities to rural areas. All the schools were comprehensive with at least four-form entry. To preserve anonymity each school was given a pseudonym. As part of the study, headteachers, heads of English departments, and English teachers were interviewed on several occasions over the course of a year. The study did not entail a specific examination of the issue of accountability: its main aim was to examine the implementation of the statutory English curriculum in its first year. However, the issue of accountability emerged in the early stages of the research when the content of interviews with headteachers and heads of English departments was analysed. Informants were not asked about accountability directly, but raised it themselves when asked how the implementation of government policy and curriculum and assessment legislation was affecting the schools, the department, and their work as individuals.

A range of attitudes and comments about accountability was identified from the interviews. They ranged from those who viewed greater accountability as an aspect of change in a cautiously positive way:

I think the whole issue of accountability ... to the parents, to the governors has affected us, and again in positive ways. I think we've responded positively ... it's forced us to define our practice, not in a defensive way but to set it out and make it clearer, more accessible to parents and governors... (Head of department, Christopher Marlowe School);

to those who had strongly negative perceptions of accountability, viewing it as covert, or in some cases, overt, surveillance:

In terms of accountability – we've managed not to use that word so far – but I think that in accountability we are more aware than ever of how many people, as it were, are keeping an eye on us. I don't want to sound too melodramatic, because I'm not personally aware at the moment of people doing it. It's the introduction of the right of parents, of governors, to question your judgement. (Head of department, Queen Caroline's, November 1992)

Even though the comments of the head of department at Christopher Marlowe were cautiously positive, emphasising benefits gained from defining the department's practice, this change was forced and may not have been the way in which the members of the department might have chosen to proceed. In both examples, there was a perceived challenge to the autonomy of the department; but, at that point, no direct experience of a real threat.

In many respects, these data showed similar patterns to those reported by the Cambridge researchers (Elliott, 1981a, 1981b). There appeared to have been a shift in the way in which the term accountability was used and perceived, not only by teachers, but by politicians and the public at large. Even where the change in relation to accountability was viewed positively, interviews with heads of departments, headteachers and other English teachers, indicated also that they were aware of the pressure to conform to externally defined and imposed forms of accountability. It was articulated by the head of department at Queen Caroline's as an awareness "of how many people ... are keeping an eye on us".

Accountability appeared to be defined less as a moral obligation to clients or colleagues, either individually or collectively, than as an aspect of the disciplinary technology (Foucault, 1979) by which the work of teachers and schools could be surveyed and controlled. Interestingly, the head of department at Christopher Marlowe indicated that perceptions of increased external regulation might, paradoxically, lead to a greater degree of self-regulation by teachers. "The whole issue of accountability ... it's forced us to define our practice, not in a defensive way, but ... to make it clearer and more accessible to parents and governor". Elliott (1981b) made an important point in drawing attention to the question of who has the right to call teachers and schools to account and in identifying this as a key aspect in the process of accountability. Actors in the research reported in this article referred primarily to parents, school governors and OFSTED as being in such a position. Interestingly, this right had often not been assumed by parents or governors, themselves.

The Chain of Command: accountability, leadership and management

In relation to the organisation and management of schools, it has been argued (e.g. Maguire & Ball, 1994; Hodkinson, 1997) that managerial culture and procedures have been introduced into schools in the United Kingdom in recent years; and that hierarchical employee/employer relationships have been emphasised. The increased responsibility of schools for their own finances and resources undoubtedly has encouraged the adoption of market and managerial discourses. Although many of the actors in schools in this study identified an increasing emphasis on accountability within the school institution, and moves towards a managerial culture, there were differences in the ways in which these tendencies were realised in practice. Heads of department saw themselves as accountable to senior management for the department as a whole, but also accountable to their

department members. The head of department at Moordale described it thus: “it is almost as though I have got two roles”. Some heads of department perceived a move towards their role in the school being defined as middle-management, although the line-management form of organisation was being resisted by many. Nonetheless, heads of department often used the terminology of line-management to describe their situation, even when against the practices entailed. Thus, the social self of the head of department, as well as his/her institutional role, was being redefined discursively. The head of department at Aphra Behn, reported below, identified the ways in which specific discursive practices define and redefine reality and power relations between individuals and between institutional roles in schools.

We do have these supposedly line-management systems – I think the whole notion of line-management is silly. One of the things that has happened is that people have adopted these half-digested notions from industry at exactly the same time when the most progressive people in industry have thrown them overboard and they’re not talking about line-management any more, they’re talking about the sort of things we are good at, or used to be good at. I’m interested in management ... I think the business of how you run something and how you get it to work well is interesting and important. What I dislike is the way it has been used as a sort of froth to disguise the real problems. (Head of department, Aphra Behn)

Several heads of department articulated their role as that of professional educator leading a team of colleagues, rather than as a manager, responsible to the tier above. Their preferred way of conceptualising it was as a ‘first among equals’ (Radnor et al, 1995):

I suppose how I run the department, try to run it is as a team of professional teachers ... I think it [the role of head of department] should be as a convenor, a chair of a team working together to deliver an area of the curriculum and ... in a way that the school thinks is appropriate. (Head of department, St Boniface)

I see myself as a teacher. It is almost as though I have got two roles, in that there is that relationship you can have in a department – you are a teacher amongst them, but then you have to go and beaver away at something else that perhaps they don’t know about. (Head of department, Moordale)

The head of department at Queen Caroline’s also identified how a change in discursive practice – being called a manager – had had an impact on the way his role within the institution was defined. He made a crucial distinction between managerial and leadership roles; whilst he was happy to be a leader he was less happy with the role of manager.

What I see has happened is that I've begun to be called a manager ... I don't want to be a manager, I want to be a teacher. I do want to be the leader of the department and I recognise the managerial requirements of the task. (Head of department, Queen Caroline's)

However, interviews with headteachers indicated that they were more inclined towards adopting a managerial model, and its associated discourse. In the following example, a headteacher identified management as synonymous with leadership. He considered that there was a cultural and linguistic barrier to heads of department defining themselves as managers.

I think the bulk of my senior colleagues who lead curriculum areas ... very few of them have a culture of leadership ... of managing. They, as in many schools, find the whole notion of managing anything repellent, although they are actually doing it all the time. It's a cultural barrier. (Headteacher, Queen Caroline's)

There is evidence (e.g. Maguire & Ball, 1994; Jones & Hatcher, 1994; Hodgkinson, 1997) that the adoption of corporate styles of management in schools has tended towards a model of industrial organisation often described as 'Fordist'. This form of organisation implies the rigid, hierarchical structures employed in mass commodity production, where roles are clearly defined and in which there is little autonomy or flexibility for individuals. The comments of the head of department at Aphra Behn, cited earlier, identified this tendency, and questioned whether it was the most appropriate or effective managerial model for either industry or education. Characteristics of the *post-Fordist* organisation, such as a multiskilled workforce, lateral management structures, flexibility, cooperation and teamwork, generation of and support for innovation, and constant improvement of products and services, were the ones which the head of department at Aphra Behn suggested had been a feature of good schools and departments. The same head of department questioned why some headteachers were so keen to develop a Fordist model of management:

What is dangerous about this is that you can see some heads who are real busybodies and frustrated entrepreneurs, really getting into this whole business of running the schools. (Head of department, Aphra Behn)

In some cases, the line-management model was seen by headteachers as devolution of responsibility within the school. A chain of command metaphor was used by one headteacher to describe this:

I run it [the school] ... in the expectation that everything is devolved as far as possible to those people who are best able to deal with it. So, I like responsibility to go down the chain of command, if that's the right word ... but I think that an effective school works better if the responsibility for problems and what is achieved, therefore, is with the teachers and not with myself. (Head, St Boniface)

There is, however, a contradiction between the notion of devolution of responsibility away from the centre and that of a chain of command where responsibility is hierarchically organised. The comment by the Head of St Boniface touches upon the larger problem of headteachers who may, in theory, wish to devolve responsibility but who attempt to do this within an institutional structure which is strongly hierarchical, and by using forms of discourse which emphasise their central control over processes and events in schools. There are limits to the devolution of responsibility and self-regulating accountability by a group of equal and autonomous colleagues when in a climate of accountability which is dependent on a line-management structure, or chain of command.

One aspect of the line-management model was for heads of department to be regarded as accountable to senior management for practice in their departments: for ensuring that statutory requirements in curriculum, assessment, recording and reporting were being met. This requirement involved monitoring and surveillance of the work of colleagues, with which some felt uneasy:

I want to feel I can walk into any class and grasp pretty quickly what they are up to in there ... I do essentially want to know that what they [members of department] are doing is founded on what we have agreed because those are designed to meet the National Curriculum ... and part of my job is to make sure the kids at Riverside are being taught according to the National Curriculum Orders. (Head of department, Riverside)

What I did that I've never done before, I took in all the year 7 folders ... and wrote an extensive review ... commenting on strengths and weaknesses ... to feed back to individual teachers ... I've almost felt I've been too tentative to remotely suggest any criticism. But I had to be quite stringent ... So, basically, I had to go through ... pointing out all the strengths of the folders and some of my reservations about them. (Head of department, Christopher Marlowe)

The issue of who exercises power in the domain of accountability is complex. At the time when this research was undertaken, it was not always clear exactly who exercised power in this respect. Heads of department perceived a shift towards a hierarchically organised management structure which implied that each tier of management had responsibility for those at the level below. They were also aware that the shift was largely discursive and involved changes in terminology and the way in which roles, responsibilities and people were named and defined; and changes in the way in which relationships and social practices were defined. There was little clear evidence, at this stage in the research, of the direct exercise of power in relation to accountability, either by central government or, for that matter, by headteachers in coercive demands to teach or organise departments in particular ways, or to explain practices. However, at this point many of them still had to undergo inspection by OFSTED.

Documentation as a Mechanism of Accountability

A common way of dealing with the issue of accountability was for English departments to record and document curriculum and assessment policy and practice. Almost every head of department identified this as being in progress or already completed in the early stages of the fieldwork. The justification for doing so, in terms of accountability, was articulated as freedom of information and improved communication for colleagues, pupils, parents and inspectors. In some schools, the requirement for such recording and documentation came from senior management, in one case described as a *curriculum audit* – a term originating in the early National Curriculum documents. Although the process was often described as time-consuming and laborious, most departments ultimately viewed it as a positive development, having various benefits in terms of collaboration and professional development. It is worth noting that two heads of department quoted earlier emphasised that the documentation which they had undertaken reflected current practice within the department. The head of department at Christopher Marlowe saw it as a crystallisation of the work of the department, but also a centralisation and standardisation of practice. However, the head of department at Aphra Behn made a distinction between documentation, written retrospectively, which accurately described current practice “warts and all”, and that which represented an ideal curriculum: that is, paperwork rather than real review.

Certainly the National Curriculum is what first made us get all our resources and materials together and ... produce a coherent assessment procedure ... define our ethos to parents and how it leads to the requirements of the National Curriculum ... It centralised our practice and structural procedural things ... and crystallising and defining our marking policies. Generally, ... it's become more coherent. We make sure we have written up what we've done so clearly that another colleague could do it. (Head of department, Christopher Marlowe)

As soon as I came, the head wanted a curriculum audit, that was the buzzword, and what he had in mind at the time was that we should sit down for 6 weeks and basically write the whole curriculum ... just get it out of the way and down on paper, I think that was basically what he was after. I, and a few other people, said that we should do this retrospectively, that we should actually describe what we were doing, warts and all, and then write it up after the event, so that we had a truthful record of what was actually happening. Some departments didn't do that; they did what the head had wanted, wrote it all out and it looked good on paper ... Ours was much more messy and laborious and time-consuming, but I think much more purposeful, because it actually anchored the business of keeping track of what we were doing in the real

business of teaching, preparing and assessing ... Our target was a kind of shorthand to an English teacher who was new to the department.
(Head of department, Aphra Behn)

The documentation of policy and practice was generally seen as a positive process, although there was an awareness that it might also be a means of regulating the autonomy of individual teachers. Heads of department emphasised the collegiality of the process of documentation and the fact that it was constantly open to change and amendment.

I think that the scheme of work has become much more important as a means of running English in school. It's a fairly useful tool in the sense that it gives us a focus for discussion of what we're doing and setting an agenda for the year. It has its drawbacks, in that it can be seen by some teachers as a restriction on what they do. But we perpetually change the scheme of work to fit in with teachers' interests and new perceptions. I wouldn't like to say that our schemes of work were agreed by all staff and rock solid, set in concrete. (Head of department, St Boniface)

The work is managed in half-termly blocks of work and so in a given year the teacher would do six units. Each of the units would have a scheme of work attached to it, but we haven't finished that yet. About 70-80% of the units in the lower school have schemes of work, others are being developed. (Head of department, Tree Vale)

The regularisation of the work of English departments by means of documentation was one way in which externally-imposed requirements could be mediated, and a way in which collaboration and solidarity between members of a department might still be expressed. At a more pragmatic level, it was obvious that the documentation of departmental procedure offered a formalised account of what was going on; one which might be offered when and if individuals or departments were called upon to give an account of their policies and practices, for example in a school inspection.

Whilst the teachers and departments which took part in this study highlighted requirements for greater accountability as a consequence of the 1988 Education Reform Act and statutory curriculum, it was not necessarily the case that a substantially greater degree of external accountability was being required in practice. Each department had prepared itself for the eventuality of teachers' judgement or practice being questioned, rather than in response to specific requests or demands for such accounts. It may be the case that in the departments represented in this study, the concept of accountability had discursive power within and across institutions rather than as a requirement clearly imposed from outside. In this respect, the concept and terminology of accountability did not function alone but in relation to other aspects and examples of social and institutional discourse.

The notion of self-regulation in the context of legislative change is worth exploration. For example, it may be seen as a feature of a social order which is coercive in subtle and complex ways. Foucault's *Discipline and*

Punish (1979) suggested that in the post-Enlightenment era there was a move towards more rational forms of social control and constraint. Foucault identified Benthamite panoptic procedures as forms of disciplinary technology: these, he argued, have become widespread as concrete forms of the exercise of power (Rabinow, 1986, p. 217). Bentham's plan for penal reform was one in which prisoners were to be subjected to constant observation by means of the Panopticon: a place from which all prisoners might be observed at all times, but in which they could not themselves see their observers. Within this system, there was the possibility that no one might actually be observing; the important thing was that the incarcerated behaved as though they were being observed. A further feature of the Benthamite penal institution was the right of the public to inspect the institution and to determine whether or not it was well managed. Foucault argued that an important aspect of disciplinary technology originating in the panopticon prison was a system of permanent documentation and individualisation – a compulsory system of moral accounting. Within such circumstances, he suggested that those who were the objects of surveillance complied with the process:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principal of his own subjection. (1979, pp. 202-203)

Such procedures were evident in the use of documentation as a mechanism of accountability exemplified in this article; they represent discursive and concrete forms of the exercise of power. Clarification of procedure and practice in written departmental handbooks and units of work had created material forms of knowledge about how the subject was taught and how the department worked. However, there is a problem with Foucault's suggestion that those subjected to the field of visibility become the principal of their own subjection, which relates to the role of human action and agency. From the specific examples offered in this article, it would be difficult to argue that individuals and groups were acted upon and constituted by the discursive disciplinary power of accountability in relation to their own professionalism; that they did not attempt to contest and redefine a situation according to their own principles and priorities. The evidence in this study indicates that teachers were responsible for production of the material form of that knowledge. They chose what and how they would represent themselves, their work, values and practices in written documentation and, to a large extent, also defined the audience for these texts. In this respect, the actors in schools in this study not only had their social identities and institutional roles and relationships shaped through discursive practice; reflexively, they also shaped and defined personal and collective institutional roles and professional identity, and established the domain of their knowledge and expertise.

Conclusion

It is by no means a new argument that language has an important role in shaping belief systems and constructions of reality; nor is it a new idea that language may be used to manipulate. Political and social theory has long identified the power of discourse in constructing political, social or moral consensus: for example, Plato (e.g. 1986, 1993) discussed forms of communication and discourse and their relationship to truth. However, many social, cultural and economic changes in the recent past have been enabled through changes in linguistic and discursive practices and norms. Indeed, it has been argued (for example, Habermas, 1984 and Giddens, 1991) that language has become increasingly important in the achievement and maintenance of political power within nation states, and the dominance of particular interests within a global economic structure. Naom Chomsky (1992, 1994), has also undertaken extensive analysis of linguistic practice in critiques of American foreign policy and global economics. Language not only reflects reality, but has a significant role in creating it.

In this article, I have examined one of the keywords in discourses about education, and specifically, teachers' professionalism; and examined the ways in which such keywords function in public debate, and how they may be contested in individual schools and subject departments. Caution needs to be exercised in drawing generalisations from specific examples, and in attempting to identify the informants in this study as principals of their own subjection within panoptic structures of surveillance. It would be equally inaccurate to regard them as heroic agents resisting the controlling forces of state power. Such a claim would fail to acknowledge the complex and dialectical nature of their situation. Rather, it seems that imposed requirements may be transformed within institutions, and by individuals, in accordance with value systems and beliefs. That notwithstanding, accountability may also have a transforming role as well as being transformed within specific institutional contexts. It is worth reiterating that in the research reported here, it was teachers themselves in a number of schools who raised the question of accountability when questioned about changes brought by a statutory curriculum. They perceived this as an area in which legislative change in education was likely to bring changes in managerial philosophy and structure and in pedagogy, if it had not already done so.

A key element within this process was the discursive transformations which occurred at personal, institutional and public levels, and the relationships between them: the intentions of individual speakers with or against the instituted intentions of other speakers, both past and present. The examples in this article give an indication of how accountability was understood and interpreted, and the ways in which those interpretations had an impact on how teachers defined their professional identity. Particular discourses relating to accountability were, however, also constrained by the historical, social and micropolitical contexts within which they occurred.

At a time when the work and professional identity of teachers appears to be ever more circumscribed by external controls, and by a culture of surveillance, it is all the more important that critical analysis is undertaken of the way in which individuals may be agents in the processes of transformation, not merely passive recipients of policies. The current climate in the United Kingdom appears not to be particularly encouraging of critical reflection. Regardless of rhetoric, from government and other sources, which claims that teaching should be a research-based profession, recent policies have tended to construct professionalism in teaching as technical skill; and the relationship between educational research and classroom practice as a process in which teachers select and apply only those research findings which are relevant to their immediate teaching needs; or one in which teachers carry out small-scale projects on aspects of their practice. These are worthy undertakings, but they are not the only ways in which knowledge about education or teaching is constructed. The larger and more complex issues relating to expectations of teachers, definitions of their professional identity and work, and the ways in which these are constructed and changed are equally important areas for examination.

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LOUISE POULSON

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