GOVERNMENT MANDATED CENTRALISED EDUCATION AND TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

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ABSTRACT

Today, globally, governments have become the major stakeholders in defining professionalism. Many professionals are now employed or regulated by governments so that governments have created a hegemony on professionals, and the teaching profession is the most affected of all professions. With the regulations of governments or imposition of top-down curricula, teachers are now can be accepted as semi-professionals or even non-professionals by governments and the public. Government mandated and centralised education affects the status of teachers and contributes to the deprofessionalisation of teachers. For this reason, the aim of this study is to carry out a critical evaluation of government mandated, centralised education which contributes to the deprofessionalisation of teachers. In order to do this, this study has three sections. In the first section I will explore the meaning of teacher professionalism. In the second section there are two parts. The first part is an exploration of how government mandated education creates a hegemony on teacher professionalism. The second part features some examples of government mandated education and their outcomes from different parts of the world, and how this situation contributes to the deprofessionalisation of teachers. Finally, the last section includes some solutions for the reprofessionalisation of teachers against the government hegemony on the teaching profession.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

From a traditional perspective, as Furlong et al. (2000) show, the meaning of professionalism is focused on three central issues – knowledge, autonomy and responsibility. Furlong et al. (2000) underlie the idea that any employment group, such as lawyers, doctors or
teachers, have a specialised body of knowledge, which is key to any traditional definition of professionalism.

Bates et al. (2011) indicate that professionalism is not an easy concept to define, and has more recently become a word that is synonymous with occupation. Bates et al. (2011) refer to Pickard and Powel (2005) to define professionalism, and Pickard and Powel (2005) define professionalism as “the possession and exercise of exclusive skills related to a body of knowledge onerously acquired and, in the public sector at least, an altruistic attitude towards those who are the object of professional attention” (cited in Bates et al., 2011, p.138).

However, Bates et al. (2011) also mention that Pickard and Powel (2005) admit that this definition of professionalism is over-simplified, and as Bates et al. (2011) state, professionalism is not considered in contemporary literature as a fixed category, but instead is one that changes and shifts according to the social and political context.

When defining professionalism in terms of what constitutes a professional role, as Bates et al. (2011) indicate, the definition can include such notions as having undergone theoretical training, having a dedication to service, and possessing a degree of autonomy. This privilege is often accompanied by the acceptance of working long hours, going beyond the norm, and there being a special agreement and trust between the professional and the clients.

Pearson and Moomaw (2005) support this idea in their study, and claim that intrinsic rewards are much more powerful for motivating teachers. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) underlie the fact that the body of research on this topic indicates that the need for personal growth, the desire for a philosophy of education, a love of learning, a love of children, resilience, collegiality, and reflectivity are more important, according to teachers. However, whether top-down government policies destroy these intrinsic desires of teachers as professionals or not is a question worthy of being asked.

As Whitty (2008) indicates, in most countries the characteristics of a profession have been increasingly determined by the state, which has become the major stakeholder in defining professionalism. Whitty (2008) shows that most professionals are now employed and/or regulated by governments. For this reason, professional status is typically dependent on the sort of bargain an occupation has struck with the state – what is sometimes called its professional mandate. Whitty (2008) underlies a very important point and states that the nature of teachers’ professional mandate has become a key policy issue for governments in many countries, sometimes as part of a broader attempt to redefine professionalism, especially in the public sector, and sometimes as a specific aspect of education reform.

As Osgood (2006) observes, like other professionals working in education, teachers are subjected to disempowering regulations in the name of higher standards. For instance, Osgood (2006) states that advocates of the professionalism agenda believe that professionalisation could lead to a strengthened position and increased respect for those who work in early childhood education and care, but concerns abound that a process of professionalisation could be used as a means of control and
provide increased domination to those in power. This situation is not only applicable to early childhood education and care, it is also applicable to all education professionals, and this is achieved through government policies in the name of providing higher standards in education.

In order to exemplify the situation, Epp (1992) gives an example from the USA, which is that one of the reactions in the USA to the mediocrity of the country’s school system has been a governmental move to take away schools’ limited autonomy and impose strict standards of achievement, and this legislated learning approach assumed that schools were simply not doing their best and that they required stricter government control to ensure performance. As Epp (1992) shows, the legislated learning approach was aimed at academic excellence, and has been implemented in several states by means of standardisation of curriculum content, teaching procedures, testing processes, teacher evaluation, and methods of school assessment, and this top-down style of reform was based on research that implied that schools which were effective had more direct teacher-centred instruction, more homework, more testing, more lesson plans and more explicit teaching objectives. However, Epp (1992) indicates that legislated learning led to very limited improvement.

Garcia and Garcia (1996) refer to Fullan (1993), and conclude that the school reform efforts of the last two decades have failed because most have been imposed by the states legislature, governors, state departments of education and even local governing boards, without input from those who do the work. From that perspective, Pearson and Moomaw (2005) state that if teachers are to be empowered and exalted as professionals, then, like other professionals, teachers must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students, as doctors and lawyers do for their patients and clients; the freedom to do as such has been defined by some as teacher autonomy. However, it seems that teacher autonomy is prevented by the top-down policies of governments in many parts of the world.

As Fink (2003) indicates, in most jurisdictions around the world, governments, in the name of economic competitiveness, have imposed comprehensive and quite dramatic changes on state schools. Most of these changes have required a more centralised and rigorous curriculum for pupils, a plethora of accountability measures and mandatory in-service training for teachers, and carefully defined and more onerous responsibilities for school leaders.

Hargreaves and Shirly (2008) state that governments are often pushed into politically popular though educationally ineffective strategies for change, because they feel they must pander to parental nostalgia for schools as they remember them. Treating parents as customers and clients, as recipients of services, or as targets of external interventions only intensifies this sense of defensive nostalgia.

Hodkinson (1997) refers to Hargreaves (1994) in order to characterise how top-down education misunderstands the needs of teachers and the nature of education in a professional sense, and Hargreaves (1994) states that “teachers don’t merely deliver the curriculum, they develop, define it and interpret it too, it is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at the level of the
classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get... For some reformers, improving teaching is mainly a matter of developing better teaching methods, of improving instruction... The quality, range and flexibility of teachers' classroom work are closely tied up with their professional growth - with the way in which they develop as people and professionals" (cited in Hodkinson, 1997, p.79).

Hargreaves (2000) shows that shrinking public sector finances and tightening policy controls have been pushing teachers to do more work, more compliantly, and for limited reward. According to Hargreaves (2000), overworked and underpaid teachers have had to master and comply with centrally imposed learning standards, detailed curriculum targets and pervasive testing regimes, and they have seen their work and their worth become broken down and categorised into checklists of performance standards or competencies. Hargreaves (2000) states that all of these conflicting pressures and tendencies are leading teachers and those who work with them to re-evaluate their professionalism and to make judgements about the kinds of professional learning they need in order to get better at their job.

Helsby (1996) conducted a study in England into the way in which secondary school teachers in England construct and develop their notions of professionalism and how this is affected by changes in their working lives and by recent educational reforms, and Helsby (1996) reports that many of the perceived changes to the notion of behaving professionally were directly attributed by the interviewees either to the introduction of a prescriptive National Curriculum or to the general intensification of working life.

According to Helsby (1996), the terms “pressure”, “low morale”, “stress” and “burn out” were all used with some frequency to describe teachers' current working lives, and two factors were especially relevant to the idea of intensification; the first one was the need to adapt to the constant changes necessitated by successive versions of the National Curriculum, and the second was the increase in bureaucratic tasks associated with a growing emphasis upon accountability.

Punia (n.d.) gives an example from Mauritius, where primary education is compulsory and free for students, and at the end of primary education there is a national exam designed to reduce the number of students for the available places in the secondary schools. The students who fail in the exam can be a social problem for the country, and in order to avoid this problem the Mauritius government established the Industrial and Vocational Training Board (IVTB) to find a solution for these students. At the beginning of the project, according to Punia (n.d.), everything was going well, and the IVTB used a written planned curriculum and a formal assessment system as an integrated curriculum development system carefully linked with social and students’ needs. However, as Punia (n.d.) indicates, in the middle of the programme, after the general elections in the country the government changed and the management team were replaced, and the new team had its own priorities and interests and they showed little interest in the programme started by their predecessors. According to Punia (n.d.), as a result of this, the new management of IVTB failed to celebrate the success of the programme. As can be seen from this Mauritius example, the government’s mandate
in education not only affects educators, it also affects students, teachers and the success of the whole system.

Hargreaves (2010) shows that Finland receives a lot of international policy attention, and that it ranks number one on most PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) assessments, has the narrowest achievement gaps in the developed world, and is a world leader in corporate transparency and economic competitiveness. As Hargreaves (2010) states, in order to achieve this Finland avoids national standardised tests and reaches high levels of achievement by attracting highly qualified teachers with supportive working conditions, strong degrees of professional trust, and an inspiring mission of inclusion and creativity. Hargreaves (2010) also observes that within broad guidelines and with minimal steering by the state, highly qualified teachers create curricula together in each municipality for the children they know best, and the sense of delivering a curriculum devised by others from afar is utterly alien to Finnish educators; Finnish educators are grateful that they are not constantly bombarded by government initiatives, like in the Anglo-Saxon nations.

As Öztürk (2011) indicates, the elementary and secondary school curriculum has undergone a dramatic change in Turkey since the 2000s. One major factor behind this change was the unsuccessful results of the Turkish education system in the PISA exams. According to Öztürk (2011), at the beginning the curriculum change was warmly welcome by scholars and teachers. However, later on it was seen that the change was not successful. As Öztürk (2011) shows, the participation and involvement of teachers and education scholars in the curriculum design was very limited, and the research done so far indicates that top-down imposition and the exclusion of teachers from the curriculum design process is one of the most important reasons for the curriculum change being unsuccessful. Öztürk (2011) also underlines that Turkey has the most centralised education system among OECD countries, and this centralised structure can be seen in curriculum development, textbook selection, governance and inspection of schools and in-service training of teachers. In a way, the Ministry of Education in Turkey accepts teachers as non-professionals who always need supervision and control by limiting them with the imposed curriculum or materials, and this situation has resulted in an unsuccessful outcome.

According to Hargreaves (2010), the countries that have actually been most successful educationally and economically are the ones that provide greater flexibility and innovation in teaching and learning, that invest greater trust in their highly qualified teachers, that value curriculum breadth, and that do not try to orchestrate everything tightly from the top.

Pearson and Moomaw (2005) indicate in their study that autonomous teachers demonstrate less on-the-job stress, greater work satisfaction, perceived empowerment, and a high degree of professionalism. As demonstrated in the study by Pearson and Moomaw (2005), as curriculum autonomy increased on-the-job stress decreased, and also as teachers’ general autonomy increased so did empowerment and professionalism.
Goodson (2006) proposes a move to maintain, revive and establish a collaborative and theoretical mission within a new, more field-based and school-based terrain, and in so doing aims to bring new strength and vigour to collaborative research and theory work with teachers.

According to Hargreaves (2000), we are now on the edge of an age of postmodern professionalism, in which teachers deal with a diverse and complex clientele in conditions of increasing moral uncertainty, where many methods of approach are possible. According to Hargreaves (2000), what is important in this period is whether this postmodern age will see exciting and positive new partnerships being created with groups and institutions beyond school, and teachers learning to work effectively, openly and authoritatively with those partners in a broad social movement that protects and advances their professionalism, or whether it will witness the de-professionalisation of teaching as teachers crumble under multiple pressures, intensified work demands, and reduced opportunities to learn from colleagues.

According to Hargreaves (2000), this situation should not be left to fate but instead should be shaped by the active intervention of all educators and others in a social movement for educational change, and if we want to create a perfect classroom learning for students, we have to create superb professional learning and working conditions for teachers.

**Keywords:** Education; teacher professionalism; centralised education; government mandated education; reprofessi

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**ÖZET**

The meaning of professionalism and teacher professionalism

In this section I will present the meaning of professionalism, how professionals are distinguished from other groups of workers, and the motivating factors for teachers to stay in their profession.

From a traditional perspective, as Furlong et al. (2000) show, the meaning of professionalism is focused on three central issues – knowledge, autonomy and responsibility. Furlong et al. (2000) underlie the idea that any employment group, such as lawyers, doctors or teachers, have a specialised body of knowledge, which is key to any traditional definition of professionalism. Bates et al. (2011) indicate that professionalism is not an easy concept to define, and has more recently become a word that is synonymous with occupation. Bates et al. (2011) refer to Pickard and Powel (2005) to define professionalism, and Pickard and Powel (2005) define professionalism as “the possession and exercise of exclusive skills related to a body of knowledge onerously acquired and, in the public sector at least, an altruistic attitude towards those who are the object of professional attention” (cited in Bates et al., 2011, p.138).

However, Bates et al. (2011) also mention that Pickard and Powel (2005) admit that this definition of professionalism is over-simplified, and as Bates et al. (2011) state, professionalism is not considered in contemporary literature as a fixed category, but instead is one that changes and shifts according to the social and political context.

According to Day (1999), traditionally professionals are distinguished from other groups of workers because they have a knowledge base, a technical culture, a commitment to meeting client needs, service ethics, strong collective identity, professional commitment, a collegial stance against bureaucratic control over practice, professional standards, and professional autonomy.

Osgood (2006) indicates that quite often professionalism is presented as an apolitical and common sense construct broadly defined by specialist knowledge and qualifications, meeting high standards, self-regulation and a high level of autonomy. When defining professionalism in terms of what constitutes a professional role, as Bates et al. (2011) indicate, the definition can include such notions as having undergone theoretical training, having a dedication to service, and possessing a degree of autonomy. This privilege is often accompanied by the acceptance of working long hours, going beyond the norm, and there being a special agreement and trust between the professional and the clients.

As Bates et al. (2011) indicate, having dedication is an important part of professionalism. From that perspective, teachers as professionals have more intrinsic motivating factors to stay in the profession. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) support this idea in their study, and claim that intrinsic rewards are much more powerful for motivating teachers. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) underlie the fact that the body of research on this topic indicates that the need for personal growth, the desire for
a philosophy of education, a love of learning, a love of children, resilience, collegiality, and reflectivity are more important, according to teachers. However, whether top-down government policies destroy these intrinsic desires of teachers as professionals or not is a question worthy of being asked.

2.1 Government mandated centralised education and teacher professionalism

Today, governments have become the major employers of teachers. Governments are trying to have a hegemony on teachers, and this situation affects teachers as professionals. Government mandated centralised education affects the status of teachers, and teachers are now accepted as technicians and non-professionals through the imposition of government mandated policies in the name of higher standards. The high bureaucratisation of teaching professionalism through top-down imposition actually makes teachers lose their flexibility to address their students’ needs in the correct way as professionals, and this type of government mandated centralised education creates its own collapse by affecting the teaching profession in a negative way. Government mandated education and its negative effects on teachers’ professionalism, with examples from different parts of the world, will be presented in this section.

Troman (1996) shows that professionalism is explained by management and is expressed in its expectations of workers and the specification of the tasks they will perform. However, as the definitions of professionalism vary, teachers may not wholly adopt managerially dominant constructions of professionalism, but will develop their own. Troman (1996) gives the example of the UK context, and indicates that in the recent testing boycott, the state promoted definitions of professionalism which saw the teacher as a classroom administrator of externally-devised tests. However, as Troman (1996) states, teachers, supported by their professional organisations, rejected this view, with a construction of the professional as a teacher who was capable of devising, carrying out and acting upon their own assessments of children’s work.

Teleshaliyev (2014) makes a very important point by stating that, most significantly, long and dynamic contact with pupils, parents, and other community members on an everyday basis makes teaching more exposed to, and perceived as, a public or communal pursuit, meaning teachers are potentially viewed as possessing less authority and expertise. Teleshaliyev (2014) shows that, as a result of this, teaching is still considered by some to be a semi-profession. The lack of autonomy in the teaching environment and top-down policies affect the status of teachers in a professional sense in the eyes of students and parents.

As Whitty (2008) indicates, in most countries the characteristics of a profession have been increasingly determined by the state, which has become the major stakeholder in defining professionalism. Whitty (2008) shows that most professionals are now employed and/or regulated by governments. For this reason, professional status is typically dependent on the sort of bargain an occupation has struck with the state – what is sometimes called its professional mandate. Whitty (2008) underlies a very important point and states that the nature of teachers’ professional mandate has become a key policy issue for governments in many countries, sometimes as part of a broader attempt to redefine professionalism, especially in the public sector, and sometimes as a specific aspect of education reform.

As Osgood (2006) observes, like other professionals working in education, teachers are subjected to disempowering regulations in the name of higher standards. For instance, Osgood (2006) states that advocates of the professionalism agenda believe that professionalisation could lead to a strengthened position and increased respect for those who work in early childhood education and care, but concerns abound that a process of professionalisation could be used as a means of control and provide increased domination to those in power. This situation is not only applicable to early
childhood education and care, it is also applicable to all education professionals, and this is achieved through government policies in the name of providing higher standards in education.

In order to exemplify the situation, Epp (1992) gives an example from the USA, which is that one of the reactions in the USA to the mediocrity of the country’s school system has been a governmental move to take away schools’ limited autonomy and impose strict standards of achievement, and this legislated learning approach assumed that schools were simply not doing their best and that they required stricter government control to ensure performance. As Epp (1992) shows, the legislated learning approach was aimed at academic excellence, and has been implemented in several states by means of standardisation of curriculum content, teaching procedures, testing processes, teacher evaluation, and methods of school assessment, and this top-down style of reform was based on research that implied that schools which were effective had more direct teacher-centred instruction, more homework, more testing, more lesson plans and more explicit teaching objectives. However, Epp (1992) indicates that legislated learning led to very limited improvement.

Hilferty (2007) underlines that, recently, researchers have shown how changes in society and educational governance have resulted in changes to the nature of professionalism. Hilferty (2007) refers to Botterty and Wright (2000), and indicates that, for teachers, the key professional criteria of expertise and autonomy are being increasingly circumscribed to fit in with centralist agendas, and such changes alter the nature of professionalism and make it problematic for teachers to measure their occupational status against professional criteria.

Hodkinson (1997) talks about Fordism, which is a model of top-down bureaucratic and hierarchical control designed to achieve technical efficiency in a stable market place, and post-Fordism, which claims that people are the most important resource in any organisation, and it is only through their development that learning organisations can survive. As Hodkinson (1997) states, teachers’ professionalism would seem to sit very well within this rhetoric, which advocates empowering core workers and giving them responsibility for their own professional development. However, Hodkinson (1997) mentions that the current governments’ policies for the management and improvement of education are dominated by technical rationalism, which treats teachers as technicians to be controlled.

As Hodkinson (1997) shows, technical rationalism and Fordism go hand in hand, and education in this perspective is seen as a systematic process, using the metaphor of the assembly line, with its inputs, processes and outputs. In addition to this, as Hodkinson (1997) indicates, technical rationality is about the achievement of ever greater control over society and humans, as well as physical and inanimate objects, contexts and processes. Hodkinson (1997) explains the missing side of Fordism and technical rationalism by saying that “the top-down control model misunderstands the nature of education, teachers as people and their training needs” (Hodkinson, 1997, p.78).

As Alsalahi (2015) shows, teaching as a legitimate profession where teachers can practice their teaching and decide on their professionalism has been under debate over the last two decades. Punia (n.d.) states that top-down policy is popular in many developing and developed countries, as a way to determine the nature of the curriculum, teaching and assessments. Garcia and Garcia (1996) refer to Fullan (1993), and conclude that the school reform efforts of the last two decades have failed because most have been imposed by the states legislature, governors, state departments of education and even local governing boards, without input from those who do the work. From that perspective, Pearson and Moomaw (2005) state that if teachers are to be empowered and exalted as professionals, then, like other professionals, teachers must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students, as doctors and lawyers do for their patients and clients; the freedom to do as such has been defined by some as teacher autonomy. However, it seems that teacher autonomy is prevented by the top-down policies of governments in many parts of the world.
Teleshaliyev (2014) refers to Hoyle and Wallace (2007), and indicates that “over the past three decades, teachers globally have experienced increasing accountability measures associated with neoliberal education reforms. In English speaking Western countries, teachers have seen a reform through an accountability movement that questioned teachers’ institutional and individual autonomy and introduced market and bureaucratisation models of teacher accountability” (cited in Teleshaliyev, 2014, p.55). Goodson (1997) makes a conclusion and states that too detailed a set of government syllabuses which lack teacher autonomy would fail to carry the teaching workforce with it, and would in the end contain the seeds of its own collapse, leading to a collapse of teacher support and morale.

Hilferty (2007) refers to Sachs (2003), who identifies two forms of professionalism that have dominated recent debate in Australia. These are managerial and democratic professionalism. Hilferty (2007) states that managerial professionalism draws on the occupational ideology of managerialism, and Hilferty (2007) refers to Roberson (1996), who shows that this kind of professionalism seeks to position teachers as unquestioning supporters of a competency-based outcome oriented pedagogy which corresponds to the world of work. Alternatively, as Hilferty (2007) indicates, democratic professionalism, first introduced by the Australian Teachers Union, is growing to encompass all teachers willing to engage politically and take on the role of active change agents. Hilferty (2007) refers to Sachs (2003) to characterise the purpose of these two forms of professionalism, and Sachs (2003) shows that both forms of professionalism are discourses that share the same purpose of attempting to transform teachers by shaping the way they think, talk and act. Actually, it can be concluded that every attempt of a higher council or government to shape teacher professionalism aims to control what teachers are doing or tries to restrict the autonomy of teachers, and this is not only applicable to Australia, or other Western countries, this can be seen all around the world, and this is mostly done through the imposition of a top-down curriculum.

As Fink (2003) indicates, in most jurisdictions around the world, governments, in the name of economic competitiveness, have imposed comprehensive and quite dramatic changes on state schools. Most of these changes have required a more centralised and rigorous curriculum for pupils, a plethora of accountability measures and mandatory in-service training for teachers, and carefully defined and more onerous responsibilities for school leaders.

Hargreaves and Shirly (2008) state that governments are often pushed into politically popular though educationally ineffective strategies for change, because they feel they must pander to parental nostalgia for schools as they remember them. Treating parents as customers and clients, as recipients of services, or as targets of external interventions only intensifies this sense of defensive nostalgia.

According to Punia (n.d.), generally speaking, top-down initiatives descend from governments and their representatives with decision-making powers. As Punia (n.d.) shows, policy makers are frequently politicians who have to react to pressing and ill-defined social problems quickly and without adequate preparation. They rarely have the time to achieve consensus amongst stakeholders on the need for action, or to determine the criteria for the success of such projects at the outset.

Hodkinson (1997) refers to Hargreaves (1994) in order to characterise how top-down education misunderstands the needs of teachers and the nature of education in a professional sense, and Hargreaves (1994) states that “teachers don’t merely deliver the curriculum, they develop, define it and interpret it too, it is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get... For some reformers, improving teaching is mainly a matter of developing better teaching methods, of improving instruction... The quality, range and flexibility of teachers’ classroom work are closely
tied up with their professional growth - with the way in which they develop as people and professionals” (cited in Hodkinson, 1997, p.79).

As Bates et al. (2011) show, in England, for instance, prior to 1988 the curriculum was regarded as the domain of teachers and local authority advisors, and was no business of central government. The curriculum was, in fact, famously referred to as the secret garden not to be trodden on by politicians. Lawton (1996), for instance, indicates that the curriculum in the 19th century matched those Victorian characteristics. It was narrow and backward-looking for the elite, but it was made to work for the Christian gentlemen who were to lead the Empire. In a professional sense as a result of such top-down and political views, teachers were generally looked down upon as incapable or unworthy of a real profession in England. As a result of this, in England, as Lawton (1996) observes, throughout the 19th century teachers’ behaviour was tightly controlled by managers, inspectors and later in the 20th century by LEA officials, and teachers were regarded as semi-skilled workers whose performances needed close supervision. Actually, this situation is not only applicable to England, this can be seen all around the world. For instance, in the Turkish context there is nearly the same aim of control over teachers.

McCulloch et al. (2000) show that, given the centrality of the curriculum to teachers’ work and, particularly in the English context, to the perceptions of teachers’ professionalism, the sudden and enforced imposition of a prescribed National Curriculum for all state schools through the 1988 Education Reform Act might be viewed as a de-facto deprofessionalisation of the teaching workforce. According to McCulloch et al. (2000), however, such a view involves a gross oversimplification of reality and ignores important aspects of the complex and contested relationship between teachers and the state. McCulloch et al. (2000) indicate that this view is problematic because it assumes that professionalism is a clear cut concept that can be related in a straightforward way to certain attributes and, especially in this case, to the exercise of autonomy, and under this formulation teachers who are granted autonomy in their work are judged to be professional, whilst those who are expected to follow instructions are not. McCulloch et al. (2000) state that the idea of occupational autonomy is problematic, particularly in the public services whose employees are licensed to practice by the state, and McCulloch et al. (2000) refer to Murphy (1990) and mention that direct management is not the only form of control, as professionals may be socialised into desired behaviours through their training and through individual incentives which allow them to exercise only relative autonomy, a process which is further threatened by increased state regulation, which is evident in all Western countries and across all professions.

Goodson (2006) makes a conclusion and claims that too detailed a set of government syllabuses would fail to carry the teaching workforce with it, and would in the end contain the seeds of its own collapse, leading to a collapse of teacher support and morale. Goodson (2006) talks about the study by Helsby and McCulloch (1997), who conclude that the introduction of a centralised and prescriptive National Curriculum appears to have weakened teachers’ professional confidence, lowered morale, and left them uncertain both of their ability to cope and of their right to make major curriculum decisions. In addition to this, Helsby and McCulloch (1997) mention that these findings are consistent with the view of increased state control of the curriculum undermining teacher professionalism.

As Lai (2010) states, the debate over teachers’ professionalism has mainly looked at whether the profession has undergone a deprofessionalisation or reprofessionalisation, and Lai (2010) shows that, beginning in the 1980s, a trend of deprofessionalisation has been noted. Lai (2010) indicates that teachers felt that their professionalism was devalued as they faced tremendous pressure from external supervision and evaluation, and teachers felt that the measurements taken by governments led them to not respond to students’ needs, which they think is the most important element of their profession.
Maggioli (2004) shows that all teachers are by definition curriculum developers in that they select, sequence, organise, plan, deliver, and evaluate their students’ learning experiences. However, all around the world governments impose the curriculum they want by restricting teachers in terms of how to behave, what to do, and how to respond to students, and in that way teachers are depersonalised by the hand of governments.

Troman (1996) talks about the meaning of teacher professionalism in England prior to 1986, and mentions that “being professional and having the requisite skills to survive professionally at the school seemed to involve: conforming to the head’s expectations of his teachers and the kind of work they are expected to do; accepting the authority of the headteacher as having the major role in decision making concerning school organisation and the curriculum; fulfilling the role of curriculum specialist, not as a consultant or in a collaborative role but actually teaching a subject specialist to all classes in the unit and therefore being more subject-centred than child-centred; working in isolation from colleagues being a post-holder for reasons of seniority or organizational role rather than curriculum leadership” (Troman, 1996, p.477). Although this definition refers to the year 1986, when government policies are checked it can be seen that this definition of teachers’ professionalism is still acceptable today.

Punia (n.d.) refers to Harris and Hopkins (1999), who state that “despite the increasing centralisation of educational reform in most Western countries, it is becoming increasingly apparent that policy initiatives have little impact on student achievement, it would appear that centralized policy implementation can best set a direction, a framework for action, but it is local implementation that determines student outcomes” (cited in Punia (n.d.), p.4). In order to portray formal schooling today, Punia (n.d.) refers to Goodlad (1979), who indicates that the problem is that non-professionals in power tend to teach teachers how to do their job. Consequently, teacher education and teaching, to a degree, are controlled by a host of legislated requirements pertaining to accreditation, certification and mandated curricula which conspire, both legally and psychologically, to inhibit creative planning at an institutional level.

According to Moran (2009), schools necessarily employ elements of a bureaucratic structure to organise the complex task of educating large and diverse groups of students, with elements such as a hierarchy of authority, a division of labor, policies, rules and regulations. Moran (2009) also states that although such a structure is useful, there is a danger that school leaders will overemphasise these elements and so adapt a bureaucratic orientation at the expense of cultivating professionalism in schools. Actually, the bureaucratisation of schools is a way of making schools work only for the government policies, which contributes to the depersonalisation of teachers.

As Day (1999) shows, how teachers behave as professionals is fundamental to the quality of classroom teaching and learning, and much of the research indicates that this is an essential part of effective teaching. However, according to Day (1999), caught in the midst of new worlds of reform, teachers in many countries have cited ways in which their ability and motivation to behave as professionals have been negatively affected. Day (1999) states that there is a widespread perception of an erosion of autonomy for teachers as professionals, and this is characterised by an intensification of their working lives, extended bureaucratic and contractual accountability, decreasing resources and increased managerialism. Alongside these, the bulk of formal professional development activities are designed, by and large, for short-term curricula or problem-focused purposes. In order to characterise the situation, Day (1999) references Stenhouse (1975), who says that the idea that “there can be no curriculum development without teacher development seems to have been replaced in England and elsewhere by the adage that there can be no curriculum implementation without training” (cited in Day, 1999, p.20).
Hargreaves (2000) shows that shrinking public sector finances and tightening policy controls have been pushing teachers to do more work, more compliantly, and for limited reward. According to Hargreaves (2000), overworked and underpaid teachers have had to master and comply with centrally imposed learning standards, detailed curriculum targets and pervasive testing regimes, and they have seen their work and their worth become broken down and categorised into checklists of performance standards or competencies. Hargreaves (2000) states that all of these conflicting pressures and tendencies are leading teachers and those who work with them to re-evaluate their professionalism and to make judgements about the kinds of professional learning they need in order to get better at their job.

Priestley (2005) indicates that, in the last decade, we have witnessed an epidemic of education reform. Such trends are world-wide, and much of this reform has been characterised by a top-down, centre-periphery model of dissemination. Priestley (2005) refers to Goodson (2003), who states that this kind of reform is a brutal restructuring delivered in ignorance or defiance of teachers’ beliefs and missions. According to Miller et al. (2008), at one level this apparent standardisation might be said to be a good thing, as it provides the basis for greater trust in the equivalence of learning within the qualifications framework. However, as Miller et al. (2008) indicate, it might also be said to stifle diversity and creativity in the enacted curriculum. As Priestley (2005) shows, recent debate in the field of curriculum studies suggests that centrally initiated curriculum change is unlikely to be successful unless it actively engages the practitioners who are the foot-soldiers of every reform aimed at improving student outcomes.

2.2 Examples of teachers’ deprofessionalisation and unsuccessful education outcomes in different parts of the world through government mandated education

Helsby (1996) conducted a study in England into the way in which secondary school teachers in England construct and develop their notions of professionalism and how this is affected by changes in their working lives and by recent educational reforms, and Helsby (1996) reports that many of the perceived changes to the notion of behaving professionally were directly attributed by the interviewees either to the introduction of a prescriptive National Curriculum or to the general intensification of working life. Helsby (1996) reports that, for some interviewees, the combination of an apparent lessening of autonomy and control over their working lives and a sharp increase in the demands being made upon them was adversely affecting their capacity to perform their occupational task in a way that befitted their professional behaviour. According to Helsby (1996), the terms “pressure”, “low morale”, “stress” and “burn out” were all used with some frequency to describe teachers’ current working lives, and two factors were especially relevant to the idea of intensification; the first one was the need to adapt to the constant changes necessitated by successive versions of the National Curriculum, and the second was the increase in bureaucratic tasks associated with a growing emphasis upon accountability.

As Hargreaves (2010) states, in educational reform everything is connected to everything else; you cannot change one thing without changing the rest. According to Hargreaves (2010), despite these documented difficulties, whole reform designs or isolated elements of them are often exported impulsively from one country to others. Hargreaves (2010) observes that the reasons behind this are usually ones of ideological compatibility, with favoured agendas of market competition and political control over the education agenda, and cultural affinity among English–speaking nations, along with the physical travel of a very small number of international consultants or policy pollinators among and beyond them. Hargreaves indicates that one key instance concerns the transposition of national policy strategies from England to other English-speaking countries. These policy strategies centre on setting imposed targets in tested literacy and numeracy at different age points, along with curricular and training emphasis in these core subjects, and strangely England ranks relatively poorly in international tests of literacy. However, as Hargreaves (2010) points out, the country’s emphasis on
standardised testing and governmentally imposed system-wide targets has been eagerly adopted by both Ontario and Australia.

Punia (n.d.) gives an example from Mauritius, where primary education is compulsory and free for students, and at the end of primary education there is a national exam designed to reduce the number of students for the available places in the secondary schools. The students who fail in the exam can be a social problem for the country, and in order to avoid this problem the Mauritius government established the Industrial and Vocational Training Board (IVTB) to find a solution for these students. At the beginning of the project, according to Punia (n.d.), everything was going well, and the IVTB used a written planned curriculum and a formal assessment system as an integrated curriculum development system carefully linked with social and students’ needs. However, as Punia (n.d.) indicates, in the middle of the programme, after the general elections in the country the government changed and the management team were replaced, and the new team had its own priorities and interests and they showed little interest in the programme started by their predecessors. According to Punia (n.d.), as a result of this, the new management of IVTB failed to celebrate the success of the programme. As can be seen from this Mauritius example, the government’s mandate in education not only affects educators, it also affects students, teachers and the success of the whole system.

Lai (2011) observes that in 2001 the Chinese Ministry of Education began curriculum reform in basic education, including primary and junior secondary education, and this was followed by the curriculum plan for general senior secondary education. As Lai (2011) states, the reform was designed to equip students with all-round personalised development by nurturing innovation, enhancing independent learning ability, and empowering the school to develop a school based curriculum in addition to the national compulsory curriculum. In order to determine the result of this curriculum reform, Lai (2011) conducted research, and the results of the research indicate that the results were threefold: first, teachers faced a series of difficulties in implementing the curriculum reform; second, school-based teacher development was mainly done using a top-down approach, which did not allow teachers to partake in professional knowledge generation or control the direction of change; and third, the teaching research officers limited their own role to the instruction of practical techniques rather than facilitating teacher reflection and ecological change in the school.

Hargreaves (2010) shows that Finland receives a lot of international policy attention, and that it ranks number one on most PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) assessments, has the narrowest achievement gaps in the developed world, and is a world leader in corporate transparency and economic competitiveness. As Hargreaves (2010) states, in order to achieve this Finland avoids national standardised tests and reaches high levels of achievement by attracting highly qualified teachers with supportive working conditions, strong degrees of professional trust, and an inspiring mission of inclusion and creativity. Hargreaves (2010) also observes that within broad guidelines and with minimal steering by the state, highly qualified teachers create curricula together in each municipality for the children they know best, and the sense of delivering a curriculum devised by others from afar is utterly alien to Finnish educators; Finnish educators are grateful that they are not constantly bombarded by government initiatives, like in the Anglo-Saxon nations.

As Öztürk (2011) indicates, the elementary and secondary school curriculum has undergone a dramatic change in Turkey since the 2000s. One major factor behind this change was the unsuccessful results of the Turkish education system in the PISA exams. According to Öztürk (2011), at the beginning the curriculum change was warmly welcome by scholars and teachers. However, later on it was seen that the change was not successful. As Öztürk (2011) shows, the participation and involvement of teachers and education scholars in the curriculum design was very limited, and the research done so far indicates that top-down imposition and the exclusion of teachers from the
curriculum design process is one of the most important reasons for the curriculum change being unsuccessful. Öztürk (2011) also underlies that Turkey has the most centralised education system among OECD countries, and this centralised structure can be seen in curriculum development, textbook selection, governance and inspection of schools and in-service training of teachers. In a way, the Ministry of Education in Turkey accepts teachers as non-professionals who always need supervision and control by limiting them with the imposed curriculum or materials, and this situation has resulted in an unsuccessful outcome.

3.1 Solutions for government mandated centralised education and teacher reprofessionalisation

In this section, the aim is to offer some solutions for the reprofessionalism of teachers against government mandated centralised education. Instead of government mandated policies, teachers as professionals should have flexibility in teaching, collegiality and collaboration between teachers, and autonomy in decision making.

According to Hargreaves (2010), the countries that have actually been most successful educationally and economically are the ones that provide greater flexibility and innovation in teaching and learning, that invest greater trust in their highly qualified teachers, that value curriculum breadth, and that do not try to orchestrate everything tightly from the top. As Hargreaves (2010) states, “Among a number of emerging reviews of international practice a stated of the art review for the U.S. National Staff Development Council of teacher education and professional development practices in the highest-performing countries reveals that high performance is associated with highly qualified teachers being accorded wide professional flexibility for curriculum and pedagogical decisions within broad boundaries (rather than prescribed and standardized requirements) in countries and systems where teachers are well supported in their schools and accorded considerable public and political respect.” (Hargreaves, 2010, pp.106-107).

Pearson and Moomaw (2005) indicate in their study that autonomous teachers demonstrate less on-the-job stress, greater work satisfaction, perceived empowerment, and a high degree of professionalism. As demonstrated in the study by Pearson and Moomaw (2005), as curriculum autonomy increased on-the-job stress decreased, and also as teachers’ general autonomy increased so did empowerment and professionalism. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) observe that the general teaching autonomy factor is logically consistent with the need for teachers to have control over their work environment and to have personal on-the-job decision making authority, especially if they are to stay committed to the profession.

Goodson (2006) proposes a move to maintain, revive and establish a collaborative and theoretical mission within a new, more field-based and school-based terrain, and in so doing aims to bring new strength and vigour to collaborative research and theory work with teachers. Instead of top-down government imposed ideas, Goodson (2006) wants to encourage the collaborative work of teachers. In order to change the existing situation in teacher professionalism, Goodson (2006) believes that “as well as developing the already substantial literature on teacher-teacher collegiality and collaboration - a very important directional shift - I believe this means looking closely at the potential collaboration between teachers and externally located researchers in faculties of education, I think the best mechanism for improving practice is if teachers, in an on-going way, research and reflect upon their own practice” (Goodson, 2006, p.18). As Goodson (2006) shows, what he is aiming for is to ensure that teachers’ voices are heard, heard loudly, and heard articulately. In this respect, what Goodson (2006) expects is to establish such notions as the self-monitoring teacher, the teacher as researcher, and the teacher as extended professional.

According to Hargreaves (2000), we are now on the edge of an age of postmodern professionalism, in which teachers deal with a diverse and complex clientele in conditions of
increasing moral uncertainty, where many methods of approach are possible. According to Hargreaves (2000), what is important in this period is whether this postmodern age will see exciting and positive new partnerships being created with groups and institutions beyond school, and teachers learning to work effectively, openly and authoritatively with those partners in a broad social movement that protects and advances their professionalism, or whether it will witness the de-professionalisation of teaching as teachers crumble under multiple pressures, intensified work demands, and reduced opportunities to learn from colleagues. According to Hargreaves (2000), this situation should not be left to fate but instead should be shaped by the active intervention of all educators and others in a social movement for educational change, and if we want to create a perfect classroom learning for students, we have to create superb professional learning and working conditions for teachers.

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