

Making Teaching a Profession: a comparative view

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The Two Nations of Teachers

The traditional role of a 'teacher is that of the guardian and transmitter of spiritual wisdom. Thus in the Christian-west, teaching was originally the prerogative of the priest; in Islam that of the *imam* or *mullah*; in India that of the *guru*. In Europe, despite the growth of humanism and the gradual secession of education during the sixteenth centuries, the teacher in grammar school, *gymnasium* or *lycee* retained a special status. He may no longer have solely been concerned with the world of the spirit, but he still had esoteric and professionally useful knowledge that he could pass on to a privileged elite, a status that has been retained to the present century by teachers in universities and selective secondary schools.

There is, however, another more lowly tradition of teaching: that of the 'dame' or 'minding' school, where, as the English poet Crabbe noted

'... a deaf, poor, patient widow sits
And awes some thirty infants as she knits.'

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in both Europe and America, schools for the 'infants of humble, busy wives' were kept, not only by widows, but also by disabled soldiers and the like, who were incapable of other work. In countries that were, at this time, being industrialised there was an urgent need for the large scale provision of elementary schools that would, not only provide for child minding, but would make working class children literate while, at the same time, teaching them to accept their station in life. For an adequate elementary school system, teachers were needed in large numbers, and, as in third world countries that are today trying to provide universal primary education, the most lowly qualifications had to be accepted. Elementary school teachers remained, in Macaulay's phrase, 'the refuse of all other callings'. Teaching also became one of the first professions to welcome women, so that it soon became, after nursing, the major women's profession. To provide a modicum of training, most countries introduced an apprentice 'pupil-teacher' system in their elementary schools, although many who failed their apprenticeship continued to teach;

unqualified teachers remained a significant element in the teaching force of most western countries well into the present century. However, in order to improve standards, most states in Europe and America had by the mid-nineteenth century, established 'normal schools' to train the best of their elementary school teachers. As these 'schools' were monotechic institutions, providing for qualifications of sub-degree standard, they did not have the status of institutions of higher education. Their curricula comprised three areas taught concurrently: the continuation of the student's personal education; pedagogy and methods of teaching; practical experience in schools. This is a pattern that has continued to the present day, although the balance of the three elements has changed from time to time.

It was thus that the creation of parallel school systems, secondary and elementary, precipitated two 'nations' of teachers: the predominantly middle class graduates, few in number, who taught in universities and secondary schools; the very much larger number of non-graduates who had themselves been educated in working class elementary schools and then returned to teach in such schools. Members of the two nations of teachers, therefore, came to be distinguished by their social origins, the schools they had attended, the length, organisation and content of their post-school courses, the qualifications they obtained, the salaries and status they achieved, and the professional organisations, if any, to which they belonged.

In Germany, the distinction between the two types of teacher goes back to at least 1696 when Francke created separate *seminare* in Halle for the training of elementary school and *gymnasium* teachers. This German example was ultimately to be followed by the rest of Europe. In France a gulf has long existed between the elementary school *instituteur* and the secondary school *professeur*; Napoleon created the *écoles normales* for the former and the *écoles normales supérieures* for the latter. In Britain training colleges for elementary school teachers were established from mid-century onwards. It was not until the last decade of the nineteenth century that universities in England and Wales had teacher training departments. Although

these departments initially only trained elementary school teachers, after the first world war they concentrated on providing a year's training for secondary school teachers. However, it was not until 1974 that it became obligatory for graduates wishing to teach in secondary schools to train; it is still unnecessary for graduates in science and mathematics to do so.

The Mingling of the Two Nations

In countries that have achieved elementary education for all, but where secondary and higher education remains confined to a small elite, the gulf between the two nations of teachers remains. Most advanced countries, however, realise that, for their industrial and commercial development to continue, an increasing proportion of their population must have secondary and higher education. Such countries aim at least to provide education for all to the age of 15 or 16. When this is achieved, elementary and secondary schools cease to belong to parallel systems, but become stages in everyone's education. The expansion of secondary education results in many former elementary school teachers being moved to secondary schools, and non-graduate certificated teachers from teachers' colleges being appointed to teach younger secondary school pupils, or the less able, or to be in charge of physical education or craft subjects. Thus the distinction between the two nations of teachers begins to be blurred.

The United States was the first country in the world to create a fully comprehensive schools system. In the post-war period when most European countries were striving to provide secondary education for all, while, at the same time, coping with a bulging birth rate, the United States was ensuring that at least half its population continued full time education after the age of 18. To achieve such a target many more teachers were needed. The U.S.A.'s remarkable achievement was that, while producing these additional teachers, it also increased the length of teacher training courses. The old style normal schools have long since disappeared in America; some were upgraded to teachers' colleges, while others became the nucleus for multipurpose state colleges and universities. Today it is only a small minority of American teachers who are educated in monotechnic colleges; the majority attend either liberal arts colleges or departments of education on university campuses. It is now usual for teachers in both primary and high schools to have followed a four year course leading to a degree, although high school teachers are increasingly expected to take a further year's course leading to a Master's degree. Although different states have different salary scales, almost everywhere there is a basic scale for all teachers, but with higher qualifications and extra duties earning additional pay. There is thus no difference in kind between high school and primary school teachers. The former do not come from families with a higher social status than the latter, and are not regarded differently in their local communities. Both the major teachers' unions, the

National Education Association and its much smaller rival, the American Federation of Teachers, represent teachers from every type of school (and the former, educational administrators as well). The United States has thus gone much of the way towards achieving a unified all graduate teaching profession.

Britain is moving along the same road. Until the creation of secondary education for all with the implementation of the 1944 Act, there was a clear distinction in Britain between non-graduate certificated teachers, who had taken a two year course in a training college, and university graduates (an increasing number of whom were taking a fourth year postgraduate initial training course). As in the U.S.A., once the secondary sector expanded, so elementary school teachers moved to secondary schools, and teacher training colleges began to prepare students to teach in secondary schools. Again, as in the U.S.A., all teachers now shared the same basic scale, but with further payment being made for extra training and qualifications, and for undertaking special responsibilities. The difference between the four teachers unions that had once represented the separate interests of grammar school headmasters, headmistresses, masters and mistresses, and the National Union of Teachers, with its overwhelming elementary school membership, lost its edge. In 1960 the teachers' certificate course was lengthened from two to three years. Even more significant, on the recommendation of the Robbins Report in 1963, suitably qualified teachers were enabled to take a four year course leading to a B.Ed. degree validated by a university. The decline in the birth rate in the seventies made a dramatic reduction in the number of teachers required in Britain. As a result, some colleges of education were closed, others merged with other institutions of higher education, and almost all the remainder became multipurpose institutes of higher education. Therefore, by today in Britain, as in the United States, almost no monotechnic teacher education college remains. The decrease in the number of teachers required made it possible to demand higher entry qualification from those intending to teach and, in 1980, the three year certificate course began to be phased out, and replaced by three and four year courses leading respectively to general or honours B.Ed. degrees. So Britain, too, was beginning to achieve a more unified all graduate profession.

The effect of comprehensivisation on the structure of the teaching profession has been very different in France. Comprehensive schools for pupils between the ages of 11 and 15 were achieved in France in 1959, and in 1975 these became, as a result of the Haby reforms, non-streamed colleges providing a common core curriculum for all pupils. The second 15+ cycle (*lycée*) provides both a three year course leading to the Baccalauréat (for university entrance) or technical diploma, and shorter courses leading to vocational or technical certificates. To meet these needs there has developed, from the viewpoint of a foreign

observer at least, a bewildering hierarchy of teachers. At the top of the status pyramid are the *agrégés*, elite graduates who are qualified to teach in either *lycée* or university, and who now tend to concentrate on the final year of the *baccalauréat*. Next in the status hierarchy are the *professeurs* who have been awarded the CAPES (*certificat d'aptitude au professorat des enseignement de second degré*) or, for teachers of technical subjects, the CAPET. On completion of their three year university course, students take a further year to prepare for the theoretical CAPES/CAPET examination, and then go on to a year's practical training in one of the regional centres attached to universities. Both the *agrégation* and CAPES are competitive examinations with a very high failure rate. Those who succeed have permanent tenure with defined hours of work: 15 hours a week for *agrégés* and 18 for CAPES. Because of the shortage of secondary school teachers in the fifties, new monotechic institutes (IPES) were created in 1957 specifically to educate teachers for secondary schools. Students were recruited to IPES at the end of their first year in university, when they sign an agreement to teach for ten years and are then given a small salary; they are then prepared for the *licence* and then for either the *agrégation* or CAPES.

At the base of the status pyramid there remain the *instituteurs* who now need a *baccalauréat* to enter an *école normale* where they take a two year course followed by two years' probation in school. *Instituteurs* teach 27 hours a week. When secondary school teachers were in short supply in the fifties and sixties, some *instituteurs* were appointed to teach younger pupils in secondary schools. Today, after three years in a primary school, *instituteurs* can take a year's course at a centre annexed to an *école normale* and sit the competitive CAPEGC examination which enables them to teach in a *college*. This course leading to the CAPEGC is also open to students who have successfully completed two years at university. Technical instructors in *lycees* (*professeurs techniques adjoints*) take a two year course in a training centre. Even all this provision has been insufficient to supply the manpower needed by secondary schools, and one of the features of the French system is the number of non-tenured and part time assistants that are employed. Each category of teacher has a different salary. In France, the salaries of all government employees, including those of teachers, are calculated according to the point at which they are placed on an index classification system. As a result differentials are difficult to change, especially as each group of teachers has its own association to protect its interests. The effect of the extension of secondary education in France, therefore, unlike that in America and Britain, has been to create a more diversified, rather than a more unified, teaching profession. Over the years, the two nations of teachers have become a federation of small states.

The Teacher's Roles

The variation in the response of the United States, France and Britain to the need to provide more teachers in secondary schools illustrates different views about the nature of education and of the teacher's function. As these represent a range of views that are replicated in many other parts of the world, reference will continue to be made to these three countries.

In America, the world's richest country, it has been possible to take a more leisurely and expensive approach to education than in Europe. The vastness of the country, and the recent history of the moving frontier, has resulted in American education being decentralised. The appointment of teachers, the running of schools and determining the content of their curricula are matters for local communities. The certification of teachers is the concern of individual states. It is therefore difficult to generalise about American education. During the first half of the twentieth century, the period of the melting pot, the need to weld people with a variety of backgrounds into stable and democratic communities was a paramount American concern. It was necessary to look to the future rather than to the past. It is little wonder, therefore, that Dewey's pragmatism was so attractive to American educationalists, and that, until recently, the emphasis of American schools, both primary and secondary, has been, not on the transmission of knowledge for its own sake, but rather on developing the pupils' intellectual, practical and social skills within a democratic atmosphere of working together: of 'doing' and 'sharing'. In implementing such a policy the need of the American teacher was, not so much to have detailed knowledge to transmit, but rather to have acquired a number of practical, 'research' and social skills: to be able to combine the roles of teacher and community worker. Consequently the emphasis of teacher education courses in America was on methodology, school organisation and ways of dealing with pupil problems, rather than on the subject matter to be taught.

The ethos of French education could not be more different. Teachers throughout France have to teach curricula and prepare for examinations, that are prescribed in detail from the centre. French schools have always given the highest priority to instruction: to the transmission of knowledge and to intellectual development. The view of French educationalists, unlike that of their colleagues in the United States and Britain, is that social skills and education in its wider sense are matters for the family, church and the community rather than the school. The particular role of the teacher in France is illustrated in an extreme way by the *agrégé*. Having triumphed through years of competitive examinations to reach his position of eminence in the education system, the *agrégé* is superbly well qualified to transmit knowledge. Until recently, at least, his most cherished teaching method was the *cours magistral*, a series of formal lectures given without interruption from the class. Even today,

having taught his specified 15 hours, the *agrège* need not have any further contact with the school or its pupils. Both holders of the *agrégation* and CAPES are regarded as 'visitors' to schools; they need not concern themselves with the marking of books and supervising duties; these are matters for assistant teachers and part-time *surveillants*. It is not surprising, therefore, that, despite Durkheim's signal work as Professor of Education at the Sorbonne, that 'education' is not a well developed subject in France, and that, traditionally, courses for the education of teachers are more concerned with the content of the subjects to be taught, than with methodology, or even with the psychological aspects of teaching.

In Britain, it is local education authorities who appoint teachers and they also, in law, control the curricula of schools. In fact, however, except on the rare occasions when there is a public outcry, headteachers and their staffs have complete freedom over the organisation of schools and what is taught. The freedom and power of British headteachers, in particular, causes astonishment in foreign observers. In secondary schools the greatest curricular constraint is the necessity to prepare pupils for external leaving certificate examinations. With the disappearance of the 11% secondary entrance selection, primary schools are not constrained in the same way as secondary schools, and primary school teachers, if they wish, can experiment at will. There is, therefore, a great variety of practice in British primary schools, although the majority tend towards informal 'child centred' and group activity methods: a tendency encouraged by teacher training courses and, until recently at least, by official reports.

English secondary school teachers tend still to be influenced by the traditions of the great nineteenth century public (i.e. independent) schools where it was the teacher's duty, not only to teach in the classroom, but also, through the residential 'house' system, to initiate pupils into the gentlemanly speech, dress, manners and attitudes of the English upper classes. Group solidarity was also encouraged by team games and extra curricular activities in which all teachers were expected to participate. The organisation and ethos of the public school was emulated by state grammar schools, and an attempt is made, even in some comprehensive schools, to continue in the same tradition. British secondary school teachers tend to be more concerned than their American colleagues about conformist pupil behaviour (some comprehensive schools still insist on school uniform), and in Britain it is still legal to use corporal punishment. British teachers in general are also more concerned than their French colleagues with involvement in games and extra curricular activities and acting *in loco parentis*. In this they are carrying on in a cultural tradition for which no formal training is required. Postgraduate teacher training courses for secondary school teachers tend, therefore, to concentrate on methods of teaching specialist subjects, although the more radical courses do question the social assumptions on which the British educational system is based.

Response to Change

Change within education tends to be slow and intermittent. Even government policies can be thwarted by conservative teachers and administrators. Fundamental change often only happens as a result of a crisis precipitated by a public outcry. There had been a developing reform movement in the United States before the agitation that followed the Russians launching Sputnik in 1957, and in France before the student riots of 1968, but these events gave the reform movements a new momentum. After Sputnik, academic critics of American education were joined by politicians, the military and the public in general. Criticism was aimed primarily at the curricula of schools and teacher training courses. In schools, there was a demand for a 'return to basics', for a concentration on mathematics and science rather than on life adjustment courses. There were also attempts to make teachers more accountable; there were even schemes to introduce 'performance accounting' whereby teachers were rewarded according to 'productivity', but these were successfully opposed by the teacher associations. Thus in the sixties the emphasis of teaching in the United States veered somewhat from the social to the academic. There was a parallel movement in teacher education. Courses for intending teachers were criticised because, unlike those in France, not sufficient time was spent on learning the subjects that were going to be taught. One of the results of this criticism was to provide a new route to teaching to liberal arts graduates who, having completed their four year degree courses, could now take a one year postgraduate teacher training course. A further criticism was that in teacher training courses, there was not a proper study of psychology, sociology and philosophy as disciplines in their own right, so that a consideration of curricula, methodology, school organisation and the like lacked intellectual rigour. This latter criticism was also much voiced in Britain in the sixties. The introduction of the B.Ed. degree led to a demand for the replacement of courses on the 'principles' of education (which R.S. Peters described as 'undifferentiated mush') by a study of the psychology, philosophy, history and sociology of education as separate disciplines. During the period, both university departments of education and colleges of education appointed specialists in these areas, and the study of education was transformed as a result. Not that this transformation improved the quality of teaching in the schools. In the late sixties there was so much criticism from primary school teachers about the lack of practical understanding of new recruits to the profession, that the government established a committee of enquiry (the James Committee) in 1971 to study the question.

In France, the reform of education after the events of 1968 took an entirely different direction from that of the United States in the sixties. The students had demanded greater participation and a lessening of the traditional concern for the narrowly intellectual, so that more attention could be given to personal development: physical,

aesthetic and social. The reform movement, culminating in the controversial Haby reforms of 1975—77, attempted to provide an education that would meet the differing needs of pupils; that would link school with work and with the life of the community; that would provide for guidance and counselling. Such a programme required the teacher to be an educator in the American or British sense. To make such a change possible, the Joxe Report of 1971 suggested that more time should be given to the professional, as well as the academic training of teachers, and that within this professional training an attempt should be made to integrate educational theory with practical experience. Thus, although educationalists in America, France and Britain had started with different assumptions, their views, by the seventies, were converging in their concern for a more balanced curriculum in both schools and institutions that trained teachers.

Inservice Education

The results of changes in initial training take time to affect schools, if they ever do so. The need for curriculum reform in the sixties was so urgent that a new significance was given to inservice education. In Britain, the James Committee recommended that inservice education should be given priority over initial training. This was a view that gained force during the seventies. The fall in the birth rate in western countries resulted in a sharp decline in the number of teachers required, and initial teacher training courses were cut severely. Schools would therefore, have to depend largely on existing staff for any innovative policies.

Inservice courses had long been a feature of teacher education in most European and American states. They were provided by a number of agencies including the teachers' professional associations. In America teachers' courses were well developed because teachers are salaried for ten months in the year, so that those attending summer courses are paid to do so, and, furthermore, have the possibility of having their salaries increased if they can improve their qualifications as a result of their attendance. Nowhere, however, until the late fifties were teachers' courses part of an integrated movement for curriculum reform. In the U.S.A., dissatisfaction with the school curriculum in the fifties resulted in the establishment of a number of curriculum development projects, particularly in the sciences, and these were given an added impulse as a result of the increased funding made available by the 1957 National Defence Education Act. These projects were based on subject departments in universities and colleges rather than on education faculties or teachers' colleges. Eminent scientists acted as consultants, and materials were developed by teams of subject specialists on secondment. The American

experience was the inspiration for Nuffield Science Teaching projects in Britain, which, like their American counterparts, were based on subject disciplines, but with the main object of producing reformed 'O' and 'A' level certificate courses. Curriculum projects in America and Britain lacked central control and co-ordination: a situation that remains in the United States. In Britain, in the early sixties, an attempt by central government to concern itself with the curriculum aroused such opposition from the teachers' unions, that the best that could be achieved was a Schools Council to foster curriculum research and development, funded by central government and local education authorities, but with a majority of teacher members. In France, of course, government involvement presented no problems. Curriculum development is the concern of a series of curriculum commissions, which, in addition to specialist administrators and school inspectors, include senior teachers and, where appropriate, university subject specialists. The commissions prepare national guidelines on the content, methodology and the time to be allocated to individual subjects and, after informal consultation with teachers and others, these are adopted and become binding on all schools.

All the inservice education and curriculum development discussed above is based on the R.D. and D (Research, development and diffusion) centre — periphery model: an authority at the centre (a curriculum development group or government committee) produces guidelines or teaching materials, and teachers at the periphery are encouraged or obliged to accept them. During the seventies it became clear that such a strategy does not work. In Britain, the Schools Council was much criticised and began to question its own strategy. In France, there was a well orchestrated grass roots opposition by groups of teachers to the central control of the curriculum. In order to improve the diffusion of innovations, curriculum development agencies in many parts of the world established local teachers' centres, so that teachers could see and discuss the use of new materials. Sometimes these centres concentrated on one subject area such as mathematics; more frequently they covered a variety of materials prepared for a range of ages. In the later seventies the activities of teachers' centres began to change. Teachers began to initiate research and curriculum development themselves, so that curriculum development became school based. In Britain, the Schools Council, in addition to carrying on with some of its major projects, now gives financial aid to development work by local groups of teachers. Teachers are moving to the centre of curriculum development; the inspector, advisor and teacher educator are moving to the periphery. This development is in its infancy, but it holds out a hope for a new professionalism amongst teachers in every type of school.